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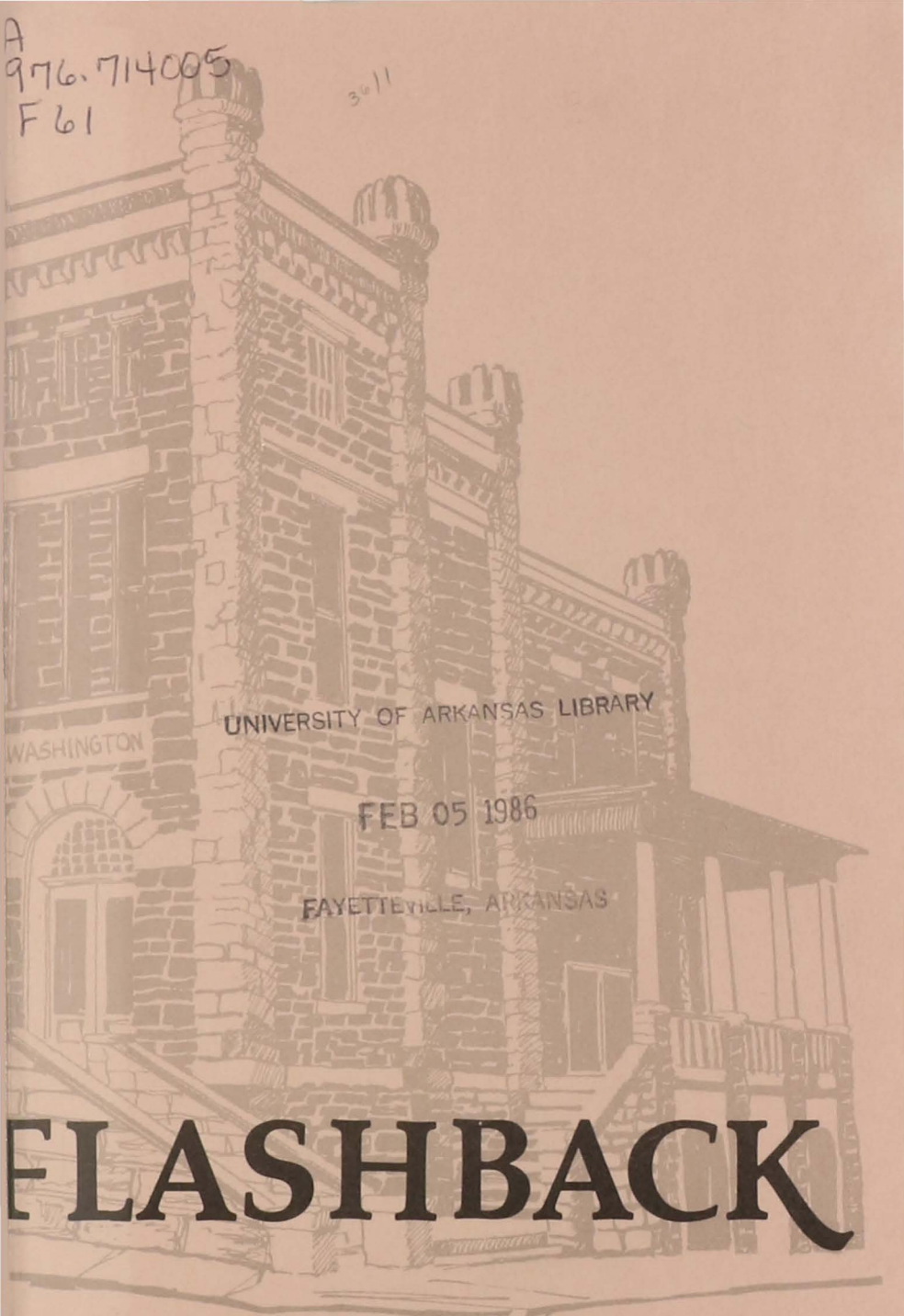

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FLASHBACK

Preserving the Past for the Future

February, 1986
Washington County Historical Society

FLASHBACK is published quarterly in February, May, August and November. All material being submitted for publication should be sent to the editor at 118 East Dickson Street, Fayetteville, AR 72701. No payment is made for the articles published in FLASHBACK.

Membership in this Society is open to anyone interested in the collection and preservation of Washington County history. Membership dues are $7.50 annually, payable on a calendar basis.

Copies of FLASHBACK for prior years cost $5.00 each. Current year's issues are $3.00 each.

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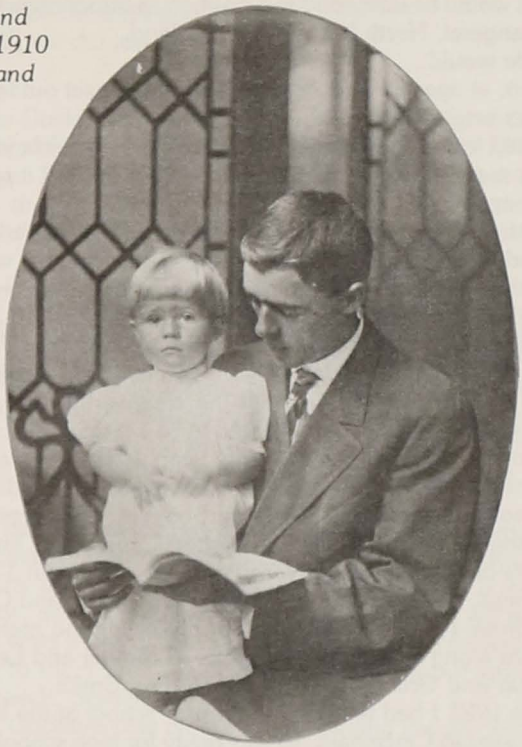
FLASHBACK

Published by the Washington County Historical Society

Volume Thirty-six *Number One*

Dane Mansen Greer and
David McKay Greer, 1910
Whangarei, New Zealand



INTRODUCTION or: There and Back Again

(with apologies to Bilbo Baggins)

by David M. Greer

I cannot remember the little cottage near the beach on Limestone Island in Whangarei Harbor, where I spent my first two years. But I remember what Mother told me about it later. "Where it's never cold," she said, "and it's never hot, and the wind never stops blowing, and there's always the sound of the wind in the trees, and, always, the surf on the beach. Where the pohutukawa tree blooms red at Christmas." Then she added, "And where oysters grow on trees." Somewhere nearby were trees whose roots stood up out of the sea at low tide, with oysters on them similar to our Florida mangrove swamps, I suppose.

In 1907 my father and mother were newlyweds, living in Independence, Ks. where Dad was a chemist in a cement plant. Both had grown up in Fort Smith, Ar. Dad had just graduated from Stanford, with his M.S. in Chemical Engineering — a rare thing in those days. He was on his first job, testing cement in the plant production department. One day a telegram arrived, from David Starr Jordan, President of Stanford University, asking if

Dad would be interested in a position as Superintendent of a cement plant in Whangarei, North Island, New Zealand.

He would.

So, at ages 24 and 22, Dad and Mother set out for New Zealand, on the other side of the world.

Dad found the cement plant, on Limestone Island in Whangarei Harbor, in a mess. It was operating, after a fashion, but it wasn't producing usable cement.

After three years, the plant was operating properly. Men had been fired, hired, machinery had been rebuilt, and cement was being shipped out. Mother and Dad were thinking of coming home. I was born in 1908, my brother, Lewis, in 1910, so in November 1910 — springtime in New Zealand — we came home. (Mother told me later than I went about saying to my aunts and uncles: "Didn't you *ever* see a pahutukawa tree?")

I don't know why Dad left the engineering profession. Mother told me once that he had always wanted to be a farmer. A college classmate and old friend of Dad's told me (twenty years later) that Dad had told him that he wanted a kind of life where he could spend time with his boys. Whatever the reason, he took his savings and bought 120 acres of hillside farm in the Ozarks near Cave Springs in Benton County, Ar. Then two years later, 160 acres of better land, in Washington County about 12 miles south of Siloam Springs, and on the road between Wedington and Cincinnatti. Here we lived from 1914 to 1921. Most of my childhood memories are of these two farms along with our winter visits — Mother and Lewis and I — to Grandfather and Grandmother McKay in Fort Smith.

In 1921 I had finished "grammar" school at the little Rennick School on the road to Cincinnatti, so was ready for high school, but there was no high school. Dad gave up farming, moved the family to Siloam Springs, where he took a job as Principal of the High School. Later in 1922, we went to Bentonville where he became Superintendent of Schools. A comment on the change: I don't know where Dad got the idea that as a farmer he would be more with his boys. We saw him at milking time and at meals, the rest of the time the hard work of a farm was enough to exhaust him.

These are the places where I grew up, in the Arkansas Ozarks: age four to twelve, on the farms in Benton and Washington Counties; twelve through eighteen, in Siloam Springs and Bentonville, (at the time, towns of 2000 to 3000 people). After 1925 I was off and running to the University of Arkansas and Stanford University, followed by engineering jobs in Pittsburgh, Newark, Washington D.C. (with a year off for graduate school in Cambridge, Mass.), Little Rock, Houston, Montclair, N.J. I didn't come back home, to stay, for 41 years.

In 1967 the grapevine in my yard in Montclair stopped bearing full bunches of grapes. I cut off a piece and took it to the nursery. The nurseryman said, "There's nothing wrong with the vine. It's the smog from New York City. Grapes just don't bear very well here any more."

I went home and told my wife, "If this air isn't good enough for grapes, it

sure isn't good enough for us. Let's go home."

The next year, 1968, we did just that.

Note From Your Editor:

The above introduces David Greer, who is the author of a delightful collection of reminiscences about growing up in NW Arkansas from 1912 until he went away to college. Your Editor feels certain that our readers will be happily entertained by the few following episodes. There will be more in subsequent issues. Thank you, David, for sharing the fun.

CITY GIRL IN THE COUNTRY

Mother was a city girl. Not the big city, to be sure; but Fort Smith, where she and Dad grew up, was a city — the only one for more than 100 miles in any direction. It had street cars, both gas and electric lights, and some of the streets were paved. And city manners and customs were urban, (Victorian). In some ways the country people, particularly up in the hills to the north where we lived, were more Elizabethan than Victorian in manner and outlook.

When we moved to our Benton County farm in 1912 Mother became the foreigner, among strangers with sometimes puzzling customs and language. Mother adapted, but she did not alter her speech. She had been a school teacher before marriage, so she required of Lewis and me that we speak English correctly, also, write it legibly. But she quickly learned to understand the neighbors, talking to them in schoolmistress English without implying disapproval of their speech. Sometimes it wasn't easy.

For example, a Mr. Guilliams was plowing and planting the garden one spring. He came to the kitchen to ask, "Mrs. Greer, wheredjuns want them flars?" Mother was able to reply at once, "Let's put them in a row against the east fence, Mr. Guilliams." (Translation: in case the reader is a furriner too: "Mrs. Greer, where do you want those flowers?")

Another time, soon after we had moved there, old Mr. Henderson stopped in front of the gate to holler "Hello!" until Mother came to the door. He asked, "Mrs. Greer, I wondered if you'uns would like to trade bones with me this year?" Mother didn't know what he had in mind, but she told us later that Mr. Henderson looked as though his bones were pretty shaky, so she thought fast and replied, "Thank you, Mr. Henderson, but I don't think we can this year."

Later she asked Mrs. Hicks, and found out when neighbors "traded bones" it meant staggering hog-killing time so they could share the parts that could not be smoked and preserved: head and bones for souse (head cheese), liver, chitlins, etc. Since we never killed hogs, Mother had given the right answer.

Some things about farm life she learned the hard way. In her home in Fort Smith, food was kept in the ice box with the Ice Man delivering every day. On the farm, there was no ice. Mother asked Mrs. Pearcy, "How can I keep the milk from spoiling?"

"Since you don't have a springhouse, you put your milk and butter in

syrup buckets, then let them down the well. They will keep cool."

Mother did that. She went out to the barn, found some binder twine, cut off enough to let three buckets down the well, and lowered two buckets of milk plus one of butter.

Now binder twine is a loose-spun, course-fibre twine for tying grain in bundles as it is cut by the reaper. If you hang something by binder twin, it will slowly untwist until the friction between fibres is lost, then it will part, even under a light load.

When mother went to the well to get milk and butter for supper, the twine had parted. When Dad got home from the orchard with his helper, one of them had to let the other down the well, with one foot in a loop at the end of the well rope, to retrieve the milk and butter.

In 1914 we moved to the Washington County farm where we had a springhouse.

Mother's department as a farm wife included the garden and the poultry. She didn't cultivate or plant the garden, or dig potatoes but she picked peas, beans, tomatoes, and sweet corn, as well as pull up carrots, beets, turnips, radishes, and salsify — unless the ground was too hard, in which case, two small boys were called into service.

The barnyard fowl were chickens, turkeys, and guineas. Chickens are the most domesticated, they come when called for meals, the most predictable, they lay their eggs in the nests prepared for them in the henhouse; and the most accommodating, if you want one for Sunday dinner, a hen is no trouble to catch. Turkeys are half wild. Mostly, our turkeys stayed around the house and barn, but came for meals along with the chickens. When it came to nesting, a turkey hen would sneak off to a fence corner or a brush pile, well away from the house. So when Mother wanted to save turkey eggs for setting or sale, somebody had to spy on the turkey hen, locate her nest, take the eggs when laid or a varmint would get them. Then we did assemble a setting with a broody turkey hen, we'd watch over her until the eggs hatched, keep track of her and her brood, and keep an eye on them until the poults were big enough to stand the weather. True, a turkey hen would hover her brood at night, but come a cold rain, she would pay little or no attention. Mother learned to dash out into the rain with a basket, gather up limp, apparently lifeless turkey poults, and bring them into the house, where she and Grandmother would dry each carcass, wrap it in a warm dishtowel, arranging them all on the rack in the warm oven of the kitchen stove. In a few minutes, the stove would be full of noisy, lively turkeys clamoring to get out in the rain again.

The guineas were less trouble. They were still pretty wild, mostly took care of themselves. Our main difficulty with them were the attempts to catch them. They roosted in the trees around the house. When we wanted one for Sunday dinner, (a guinea is all dark meat, which we preferred) the procedure was to wait until they went to roost, then shoot one with a .22 rifle. Lewis and I learned to shoot at an early age.

We didn't have ducks. We tried one year by putting a cluster of duck eggs, courtesy of a neighbor, under a setting hen. They hatched in due

course. Though the barnyard was 100 yards from the creek, the ducklings found their way there, immediately, mama hen protesting all the while. At the creek, they promptly launched themselves with mama running frantically on the bank, screaming "Come back! Come back!"

Mama was right. We had mud turtles in that creek. A paddling duckling would suddenly disappear - plop!, like the float on my fishing line when a perch took the bait. The eight ducklings lasted just three days.

After that, Mother stuck to chickens, turkeys, and guineas.

SHIRTWAISTS AND HATPINS

If women have always puzzled me, you could say that I got an early start on wondering about them. I remember two things that bothered me when I was five.

The first was a matter of dress. It was made quite plain to me that a lady must expose no skin except face, neck, hands, and forearms. I assumed that they *had* other skin, but you couldn't prove it by me. Yet Mother and my Aunts seemed delighted when they got new shirtwaists that had a multitude of small holes, eyelets. You could see the skin on their backs and shoulders. I was sure this was not proper. Also exposed were the straps that held up their petticoats and other mysteries supposedly to be seen only when hanging on the clothesline. Now why was it tabu to see skin and underwear in toto or in large patches, but perfectly all right — nay, apparently fashionable — to expose them in little bits? And when dressed for Church, too!

The other puzzle was hatpins. The last thing Mother or Grandmother did before starting out for Church was to carefully settle a big hat down over her piled-up hair, then secure the hat — feathers, flowers and all — by thrusting a big hatpin right through hat, hair, and head. I asked if didn't it hurt? I was assured that it didn't. Gingerly pressing a hatpin point against my own scalp, I found it hurt me! I thought about it, pondered on it, finally concluding that women were different.

I still think they are.

BUTTONHOOKS AND GRASSHOPPERS

You have seen those high buttoned ladies' shoes in movies like Oklahoma; but the chances are you never wore them, or, thought about buttoning them. It wasn't easy for a 5-year-old. As far as I can remember, buttoned shoes were the only shoes worn. You'd take a button hook — every household had several — and work it through the lowest buttonhole, work it around the shank of the button (a little metal shaft); apply a pull and a twist in exactly the right way, and the button popped up through the leather buttonhole, neat as you please. You repeated the process until the last one was done. Then on to the other shoe.

But did you ever think about how the buttons got on the shoes in the first place? I didn't until Mother took me to the general store at Osage Mill to get a new pair of shoes.

First, Mr. Allen found a pair of Buster Brown shoes that weren't too loose

and weren't too tight. They had buttonholes, of course, but no buttons. With a shoe on my foot, he laid the buttonhole side of the upper across where the buttons had to go, and adjusted the overlap until the shoe was snug, but comfortable, then he marked through the buttonholes, a place for each button. Next he took the shoe off my foot to put it carefully in a fascinating little machine, with the first button mark in the right position. He pressed a little lever, and a shoebutton appeared, slid down a little chute, and positioned itself right on the mark. By pushing another lever, there was a satisfying muffled click; and lo, the button had become part of the shoe. Marvelously, in exactly, the right place! This magic was continued for the completion of both shoes. It was more fun than any magic lantern show Saturday night at Cave Springs, but didn't last as long.

I wanted to put the shoes on and wear them home, but mother said,"Wait! We're going to get you some sandals too."

Mr. Allen found some that fit me. These had buckles. The uppers were all punched full of holes, I asked him "why?" He looked surprised. "Why son, them's for the grasshoppers to spit terbacker juice through!"

I liked my sandals, but I watched all summer. Nary a grasshopper even looked at my sandals!

CHRISTMAS — TOWN & COUNTRY

The year I was about four years old, we went to Fort Smith on the train, to have Christmas at Grandfather's house. The high point of the trip wasn't really Christmas; it was — both coming and going — the time when the train went through the tunnel at Winslow. Before we ever got there, the porter came through with his lighter, opened up the light fixtures in the top of the car, and lit the gas lights. A little while later, after the engineer made the train whistle blare two or three long lonesome calls, the scene outside the window suddenly disappeared. The train noise multiplied, and we were in the tunnel! The adventure lasted several long minutes.

I don't remember a Christmas tree at the Manse, where Grandfather lived, but I remember the one at Grandfather's church. It was a huge one, high above on the platform in front of us, decorated with beautiful shining colored balls and stars, with presents for us children piled around the base. The presents were furnished by the families, I think. I know that they were not equal. For I was of that opinion then. I remember howling when another little boy was presented with a red tricycle I had spotted as soon as I entered the church. Never mind that I already had a tricycle, back on the farm with no place to ride it except on our bumpy, weedy front yard. I was presented with a red stocking cap! Was it the one Aunt Fannie was knitting on the day before? Who wants a stocking cap? The tricycle was s'posed to be mine! I claimed it the moment I saw it. An outrage!

In a moment, through the church door, down the aisle came Santa Claus himself, accompanied by two reindeer, their bells a-jingling, drawing a sled. I recognized Santa Claus dimly from the past. But those reindeer, — Mother said they were — looked very little like the ones in the "Night Before Christmas" book. They surely didn't fly through the air. Their shape was dif-

ferent, somehow, sort of lumpy in places. I had no idea reindeer wore shoes. But they did have perfectly magnificent antlers!

Christmas at home on the farm was not like the above. It took a lot of preparation. Dad cut a little cedar tree and set it up in the living room, — not too close to the fireplace, — about a week ahead of time. For days we popped popcorn over the coals in the fireplace, strung the white puffs on thread, to be draped over the tree whenever a few feet of string was ready. We made strings of red cranberries, gotten from Mr. Dodson's store in Cincinnatti, to contrast the white of the popcorn. Occasionally, in the weeks before Christmas, the mail man would bring his buggy up the drive to the house instead of stopping at the mailbox to leave a package from Sears and Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, from Grandfather and Grandmother McKay or an aunt and uncle. These packages Mother would quickly hustle into some hiding place.

On Christmas morning we boys would be up and into the living room as soon as it was light — first, we searched the stockings hanging from the fireplace mantel. They would have an orange in the toe of each stocking, some English walnuts from the town's store, and pecans from cousins in Alabama, a few pieces of horehound candy, and just maybe a licorice stick. Then we'd unwrap the presents. These were mostly clothing, — new rubber boots to wear on snowy days, maybe a sweater or a new cap, and, always, books. A full day of delights, and more. But, of course, the cows were waiting. We'd dress quickly after a glimpse at all the treasures, and go clumping out to the barn in our new boots.

The 5-mile trip to Cincinnatti in the buggy (after 1916, in the automobile) took us to the Christmas service in the church. Back home, dinner would be late — about three o'clock instead of one — to allow time for changing out of best clothes, filling the woodbox, and the cooking of a chicken or guinea. By the time the dishes were washed, the pigs were slopped, the chickens were fed, the woodbox filled, once again the cows were ready to be milked, and their hay forked down from the loft. A holiday, a feast day, but never an idle day.

POT IN THE BACK YARD

When I was a boy on an Ozarks farm, "pot" was the name of something that stood in the back yard, with a fire under it on Mondays or other (seasonal) occasions; or else a vessel that Mother used in the kitchen. Or even something slid under the bed in daytime, and brought out for use only at night. And grass was something eaten by cows and horses: the ultimate source of much of our protein (a word that we did not know), fuel for our buggies and wagons, our farm machines. It was a different world, with a simpler language.

But to get back to the pot: it was big and black, made of cast iron, and too heavy for a small boy to lift. It was set on rocks, high enough that a fire could be built underneath it. The pot served a number of purposes.

For one thing, it was a wash boiler. Clothes got pretty dirty on the farm,

continued on page 34

Robert Francis Ferguson June 11, 1862-August 20, 1927
Mary Frances (Molly Bledsoe) Ferguson June 3, 1864-April 3, 1942

ROBERT FRANCIS FERGUSON

By Floyd Fulton Ferguson

Robert Francis Ferguson was born June 11, 1862 in Peoria, Illinois. His mother was Sarah Elizabeth Ferguson. She was generally known as Lady Ferguson. How she acquired this very complimentary nickname is not known.

She (Lady) was the daughter of Westwood and Sally Ann Ferguson. Westwood was born in North Carolina May 30, 1823. He was 1/4 Cherokee Indian and 3/4 Scotch. Ferguson is a very prominent Scotch name. Westwood left home when he was twelve years old. He made his way to Illinois near the towns of Windsor and Sullivan in Shelby County. He went to work for William Baker who owned a large tract of land there. He fell in love with Mr. Baker's daughter, Sally Ann, and they were married in August, 1843. They raised their family in this area, but later moved to Arkansas near Fayetteville, staying there five or six years. Next they moved back to Illinois and then to Missouri near Joplin.

The above information regarding Westwood Ferguson's family is only to indicate some of the places Robert lived during his early years.

Robert's mother, Lady Ferguson, was born November 10, 1846 and died May 27, 1905 in Hollis, Oklahoma, where she is buried. She was fifteen years old when Robert was born. Robert grew up living with his grandparents, Westwood Ferguson and family. There were other children of the family at home when Robert was born.

At the present time (1983) there are no relatives living who know whether Robert ever lived with his mother nor whether his mother ever lived at home after his birth. It is a known fact he did not live with her after her marriage to John Curry in 1868 at which time Robert was six years old. There are no records that indicate where or how Mr. Curry met Lady, his wife to be. John and Lady had nine children born to them:

1. John William Curry - born 1868 in Illinois
2. Millie May Curry - born 1870 in Arkansas
3. George Delbert Curry - born 1872 in Arkansas
4. Charles Henry Curry - born 1875 in Arkansas
5. Mary Emma Curry - born 1877 in Missouri
6. Berlin Oscar Curry - born 1880 in Missouri
7. Clara Eva Curry - born 1882 in Arkansas
8. Gilbert Edwin Curry - born 1885 in Arkansas
9. James Clifford Curry - born 1887 in Arkansas

Based on the above records, Robert had six half-brothers and three half-

sisters. The two children of this union I knew were John William Curry (married my mother's sister, Nettie Bledsoe) and Millie May Curry (married my mother's brother, Thomas Bledsoe). Robert and Molly Ferguson were always very close to these two families. They visited each other and wrote letters when apart. I cannot recall their ever visiting or writing to the other half-brothers and -sisters. Distance probably played a major role in the social activities of all the families. I never heard Dad say much about the others.

Strange as it may seem, my Dad never mentioned his mother's name. None of our family ever knew his reason for this silence.

When Robert was a teenager (17 or 18) he learned who his mother was, but until then he did not know. When he was at a meeting with a large group of people, his uncle introduced him as Lady's son. Robert's reaction to this revelation is not available. One can only judge, by bits of information, that this was noticeable during the remainder of his life. The 1880 census in Newton County, Missouri, shows Robert residing with Westwood Ferguson as his son and going to school from his home. It is generally believed that Dad lived with the grandparents until his marriage.

The Westwood Ferguson family moved to Arkansas in 1871 when Robert was nine. They settled in the community of Round Mountain in Wyman township, Washington County. It is thought they moved back to Illinois after five or six years. Robert often talked about the many wild animals in Arkansas, such as bears, panthers, deer, lot of smaller animals, and many wild turkeys. It was no problem to have plenty of turkey for Thanksgiving or any other time.

We have been able to collect only a few facts regarding Robert's teenage years. He told me about playing baseball. He was the catcher for his team. He claimed they used no protective equipment, not even gloves. It does seem he would have had all his fingers broken. We know he attended school in Illinois, Missouri and Arkansas. He had teaching credentials for both Illinois and Missouri. During his schooling he must have studied some music as he was most capable of singing any kind of music in a beautiful voice. He understood both shaped notes and round notes. Why he did not pursue teaching or music in some form is not known. He was the best speller I have ever heard. I remember, as a teenager in school, searching for unusual words to bring home to check his ability. During high school and after, I must have tried thousands of words, but never was able to find a word he could not spell. He'd first pronounce the word, then spell it by syllables, after which he would give its meaning.

Dad was a very modest, quiet and sincere person. His standards were extremely high in every way. Nothing would cause him to stray from them. He was also a very devout Christian. His everyday life was proof of his religious belief. Robert did not possess the outstanding characteristics of a great leader as he was shy and never wanted to be in the limelight. His desire to help was manifest daily by efforts to assist his friends and neighbors in need.

Dad was an extremely strong man physically. He was only 5'7" tall, but he weighed 190 pounds. He was very heavily muscled and, I believe, could lift more than any single person around. Often it would take two men to

move something he had just moved by himself. Many times, as a teenager, I would witness his moving of an object and then I would attempt to do the same but couldn't budge it.

At the age of eighteen I got an old Model T Ford. To change a tire I would use an old jack and sometimes the car would fall off that jack. Robert would simply walk up, take hold of the hub with one hand and lift it up so I could put a block under its axle. By way of thanks and admiration, I'd declare, "Dad, you sure are a strong man." He'd reply, "Son, it takes more than physical strength to be a *good* man."

Robert married Mary Frances Bledsoe on February 7, 1884. She lived, also, in the Round Mountain community in Arkansas, and was the daughter of James and Betty Bledsoe. Mary Frances acquired the nickname "Molly" and was called that by everyone as long as she lived.

Robert left Arkansas for Illinois when he was fifteen, although other families related to the Westwood Fergusons still dwelt in Arkansas. Perhaps Robert met Mary Bledsoe while he was visiting. No records show where they established their first home.

James Bledsoe lived on his homesteaded farm of 120 acres. There were three or four children at home when Mary Frances married. Six years after the marriage, James Bledsoe and Robert were attempting to cross Richland River near Sanders Mill. Somehow the wagon bed floated off, and even though James was considered one of the best swimmers thereabouts, he drowned. Robert caught hold of the wagon bed and floated to shore, even though he could not swim at all. James was believed to have been badly hurt by one of the horses. His body was not found until the 16th day following the accident, when it floated to the surface only 50 or 60 yards from where he was last seen. After this tragedy, Robert and Molly moved in with the Bledsoe family to help Molly's mother take care of the farm and the other children.

The farm produced corn, oats and wheat. They raised hogs for meat, as well as ducks and geese, using the feathers for beds and pillows. There were cows for milk and butter, chickens for eggs and eating. Also, they harvested from many fruit trees. Blackberries and dewberries simply grew wild and were added to the plentiful food supply.

Robert and Molly had nine children as follows:

1. Linnie Evelyn Ferguson, born November 16, 1884, died February 1, 1885.
2. Joseph Lawrence Ferguson, born March 11, 1886. He married Carrie May King, October 13, 1908. She was from Inola, OK. They had eight children, seven girls and one boy. Only five of the children lived to be adults. Lawrence died March 8, 1958 and is buried in Round Mountain cemetery.
3. William Lyman Ferguson, born April 4, 1888, died April 20, 1888.
4. Mattie Pattience Ferguson, born December 15, 1889. She married Denver Lee Hale September 24, 1905. They had seven children, three boys and four girls. Mattie died November 13, 1967 and is buried in Round Mountain cemetery.

5. Thomas Cicero Ferguson, born July 19, 1892. He married Laura Pearl Tresner August 16, 1914 and they had six children, five boys and one girl. The girl died October 28, 1918.
6. James Westwood Ferguson, born May 14, 1898. He married Ella Eileen Stone January 15, 1919. They had five children, three girls and two boys. Ella died Ferbruary 10, 1965 and is buried in Habberton cemetery.
7. Flossie Delia Ferguson, born October 18, 1900. She married James Harrison Enyart on April 30, 1918. They had four children, three boys and one girl. James died April 1, 1962.
8. Floyd Fulton Ferguson, born February 14, 1903. He married Ada Arlus Mathis February 23, 1927. They had two children, one girl and one boy.
9. Sarah Naomi Ferguson, born October 22, 1905. She married Orlando Orley Tresner and had two children, one girl and one boy. Naomi died in 1932, and is buried in Round Mountain cemetery.

The total number of Robert's and Molly's descendants through 1982 amounts to 33 grandchildren and 75 great-grandchildren. There are quite a number of great, great-grandchildren, but I cannot find the exact total.

Robert and Molly were very proud of their family. They exercised every effort to give the children the best education that would enable them to face the world once they were on their own.

Nothing more than elementary schooling was available to most of the children. Although the younger ones could have gone to high school and even college, if they had so desired, I was the only one who attended college. Even I did not finish college because I began teaching before I gained a college diploma. After that I never seemed financially able to stop work and go back to school.

Robert and Molly were very devout Christians and certainly did everything possible to teach us about spiritual needs. I remember, in the evenings, Dad would read from the Bible and explain the meaning as he understood it. He would go into great detail about how we should treat other people, the kind of conversations in which we should indulge, and the fact that we must never do anything spiteful. He often quoted Matthew 19:19, saying, "Always treat your neighbor as you would like to be treated." And Romans 12:18, which says "Live peaceable with all men as much as lieth in you."

I never heard my dad use any kind of unpleasant words. Neither did I ever hear him tell any joke that might be considered shady. If someone told such a story, Dad would simply ignore it. Almost everyone familiar with him did not tell dirty jokes or use bad language in his presence. They respected his very tough attitude regarding these things.

Robert and Molly belonged to Church of Christ at Baldwin, AR. Services were held in the Baldwin elementary school house. From the time I was only five or six years old, I remember we went to church every Sunday. The only transportation was by wagon, and the church was some four miles from home. Most of the time our family was invited to have lunch, or dinner as it

was called then, with one or more members living near the church. Perhaps once a month everyone would pack a basket of food and take it to church. After services the women would spread tablecloths right down on the ground, place their food there and everyone was invited to sample what was available. Naturally it was called "Dinner on the ground" and considered a highlight for church social activity.

No records are available indicating whether Robert and Molly ever had their membership at another church.

They lived on the farm until 1895. The success of the farm was far below expectations and the income was not sufficient to feed and clothe their growing family properly. They felt a more profitable place must be found. They got information from friends that Texas was such a place, so they decided to load up the wagon with necessities for the trip. It would require about two weeks to reach the destination they sought as best. Late in 1895, they made the journey, arriving near the town of Sherman, Texas with three of their children: Lawrence, Mattie, and Cicero.

Primarily, this was a cotton-producing country. Robert went to work for Mr. Lamb who owned and farmed a large tract of land, raising cotton for a money crop and maize to feed his livestock. Robert worked part time as a sharecropper. The only child born out of Arkansas was James Westwood Ferguson, birthed May 12, 1898 in Texas. When he was nine months old, Robert and Molly decided that they had had enough of Texas. They loaded up the wagon and headed back to Arkansas.

The family dog followed them all the way to White River, which was only two or three miles from their destination. There was no bridge across the river, so the dog simply refused to swim in the very cold water. He headed back to Texas. It took him approximately three months to return there. When he found no one at home, he went to the neighbor's house. They cared for him until he got his health back; in his travels he had gotten terribly thin from short rations and his paws were almost worn off. It took several weeks to recover, after which the neighbors adopted him permanently.

When Robert and Molly arrived back in Arkansas they moved into Molly's old home, and again tried their luck at farming, but with the same results. They just could not make ends meet. So they made a deal with John Rickman who owned and operated a small store. They arranged to purchase the store and its five acres of real estate, called Round Mountain General Store. Mr. Rickman thought Robert and Molly would make excellent store operators. It is not known for sure whether or not they bought this establishment on credit, but it is believed they did and were to make annual payments plus interest. No terms of the contract are available.

Never having operated a store, they spent a few months learning, but they seemed to catch on quickly and business began to increase. The reasons for this were not only that more people were moving into the area, but a larger inventory was kept. Robert realized a much wider selection of items was being requested daily—things that were not available at the store. He made the necessary adjustments.

More space was needed to house the added merchandise so a new store

building was planned, built only 50 or 60 yards from the old one. It had two levels, upper and lower. The lower level was used for the kitchen and dining room and a large storage room. The upper level was used for the living room and bedrooms. A large room on the north side of the building was the store. For heat in the living room, a large fireplace was built on the south side of the room by Jerry Stillwell, a neighbor, who got the rocks used from a sandstone quarry nearby.

The population continued to increase, so more services were required. People would come from miles around to the store, especially on Saturdays. They brought chickens, eggs, butter and other salables such as furs. There were several furbearing animals in that area. Trappers would catch the animals, remove the skin, stretch it on a board, let it dry for a few days, then take it to market. All the above-listed items were exchanged for flour, sugar, coffee, salt, pepper, tobacco, candy, some hardware items, some readymade clothes and lots of materials for the making of clothes.

One high point, as I remember, was that each spring Robert and Molly would order a few special items such as overalls, hats, caps, gloves and shoes. Especially for women, they ordered bright-colored materials and ladies' Easter bonnets. It was agreed that Robert and Molly would not open the boxes of hats until all interested women were present. When the hats arrived, all parties were notified. Then the rush was on! All the women and a few men would gather at the store for the grand opening. Control of the operation was a real problem. Too many women wanted the same hat and, of course, no two hats were exactly alike. At times the competition would almost result in blows being struck. When it got too rough, Robert and Molly would take charge, making suggestions as to how to handle the problem, usually by drawing numbers, a method which was generally accepted by all. Occasionally certain women would trade hats after the drawing. Naturally, a few were unhappy. Then, too, one man or another would get involved because his wife or girl friend did not get the hat she desired.

Another interesting highlight was the gathering of the Civil War veterans. There were eighteen or twenty who lived near the store. Their numbers were just about equal between the North and the South. They seemed to thrive on trying to tell the most disturbing tale about the opposite side. At times one would think they were ready to start the Civil War over again. Many of the unfavorable remarks would raise eyebrows. It was most noticeable, though, that each one knew just how far he could go. By evening, all was well with everyone tolerant.

The store was eight miles east of Fayetteville. All the produce brought to the store had to be taken to the Fayetteville market. In addition, all the merchandise that Robert stocked had to be hauled by wagon. The activity necessitated two or three trips per week, and many trips were disagreeable due to bad weather. The roads were often extremely muddy and nearly impassable. Then, too, the merchandise must be kept dry. This was most difficult when the wind was blowing at high velocity.

As growing pains continued, a post office was needed. As a consequence, a U.S. Post Office was established, named Sydenham, and Robert and Molly

put in charge, its location being in their store. It remained with them for a few years, then was moved. No records are available as to why it was moved. Robert often remarked that the post office was quite a headache, with little or no profit. He had his hands full trying to keep the store going properly. They operated the store until late 1914, when they sold it to Denver and Mattie Hale (son-in-law and daughter). After the sale, Robert explained why so much money was owed him. When people came to buy groceries and had not money, he would say, "Pay me when you can". Unfortunately, for Robert, that day never came. Some moved away and some died, leaving the bills unpaid. Denver and Mattie operated the store for a few years and closed it out. Today, there is no store.

Robert and Molly purchased the James Bledsoe farm around 1908, from the heirs. No one in our family ever read the contract regarding the purchase. It is known that they were to pay each heir fifty dollars for his or her share. Another stipulation was that a percentage of all income from the farm must be paid to Grandmother Bledsoe (Molly's mother) as long as she lived. This stipulation proved to be quite a drag on Robert and the family. It was hard enough to make a living without having to pay a large percentage of that income to another family. Molly's mother moved out of this home to live with Tom Maguire and Lizzie, mother's youngest sister. Robert was never pleased with his past experience as a farmer. When the family moved back onto the farm in 1914, Robert decided to make hog raising his major project. This proved a wise and profitable decision. More importantly, he thoroughly enjoyed the experience. He would spend hours watching the hogs eat. No matter how much corn we produced, it was never enough to last until another crop was in. He always managed to have more hogs than he had corn. When the corn in the field reached the roasting ear stage, Robert would cut and carry stalks with the ears to the hogs for the enjoyment of both of them. He purchased other food, such as shorts or ground wheat. For young hogs, he often made hominy by using shelled corn, putting it into a large cast iron kettle and cooking it until the grains were soft. He'd put a handful or two of ashes in the kettle, saying it made better food for the younguns. If one fed young hogs just dry corn, they would soon become so ill they could not eat at all. Robert always found ways to fatten his hogs. They were so well fed that during the two months before market they gained three or four pounds per day.

Molly Ferguson, being very industrious, with a lot of natural know-how, was always ready to assist people in need. She decided to become a nurse by working with doctors. She was soon considered a practical nurse, but her reputation was made as a midwife. She delivered more babies than the doctors in the neighborhood. She was called out at all hours of the night or day to deliveries. Often she was away from home for a day or two at a time. She'd never leave the patient until she was sure everything was okay. Transportation was usually by horseback, occasionally by buggy. She never contracted any disease except a light case of the flu in 1918, even though she worked wtih people who had flu and others who had tuberculosis. What she received as payment for her services was very helpful in making ends

meet. Most of the time she received very little cash.

The old house on the farm was made of logs. At first two rooms were built, then another room made of lumber was added. The larger log room was the living room, kitchen, dining, and bedroom. The smaller room was perhaps 10'x12'. My brother, Westwood, and I slept there. The open cracks between logs were numerous. Many times during the winter we would awaken to find snow on our bed, blown through those gaps. The floor in the large room and on the back porch had so deteriorated it made walking treacherous. In a few places, the boards had actually broken. Robert was not a carpenter, and he did not have carpentry tools. He often said he didn't need them because he couldn't build a chicken-coop. He was so right, but he had three boys who could make almost anything with wood. However, the old house was never repaired.

In 1918 Robert and Molly decided to build a new home. Lawrence Ferguson, the oldest son, was a carpenter so he was chosen as builder. He lived in Inola, OK, about 125 miles from Robert and Molly. He and his family came to Arkansas to live in the old place with us. They were a family of five and as we were five in our family, ten people living in an old, worn-out house was a real problem. The feeling was that any condition would be acceptable so long as the new home was being built. They did not live with us very long until they moved to another house for more room.

It was decided to build a square house 30'x30'. There were six rooms on the lower level, with an upstairs for bedrooms and storage. Naturally, the rocks used in the foundation were picked up on the farm. It was a frame building with plastered walls and ceilings. Lawrence did all the work except the lathing and the inside plastering. Hugh Howard, a cousin, came up and worked that task for us. Robert assisted with some of the lath work. There was a central fireplace with openings for stoves in kitchen and parlor. It also heated the upstairs.

Before the house was finished, the great flu epidemic of 1918 broke out. Many died from that terrible illness. All of our family were sick at one and the same time. No one was able to care for anyone else. Fortunately, none of us died. Dozens of people in our area did, however. The one person who helped us was a neighbor, Ham Tresner. he never did get the flu, so he went from house to house, doing what he could to help. His help was a Godsend. Mother and Dad both had very light cases of the flu compared with the rest of the family.

After the flu bout, the house was finished and we moved in. This was no doubt one of the most appreciated events in Robert's and Molly's married life. They were able to pay most of the cost by raising hogs and using the money Molly received for her nursing services.

(The following are memories of Robert and Molly, recorded by the author of this report.)

Robert and Molly purchased another store while still operating the Round Mountain store. It was located at Maguire Town, a small community some five or six miles from Round Mountain, and some three or four miles from Elkins. Lawrence and his wife, Carrie, operated this store. However, this ven-

ture proved to be of little value because there were not enough people thereabouts to support it. Other nearby stores didn't help its profitability. It soon closed and most of the inventory was moved to Round Mountain.

Robert and Molly were both very strict regarding disciplining their children. But I recall that Robert (my father) punished me just once, and that was for playing baseball on Sunday. Playing games on Sunday was a no-no. A group of boys, with some adults, had organized a baseball league to play Saturdays and sometimes on Sunday. This time they were playing on Sunday. I knew my parents would not give me permission to go, so I simply slipped away to the playing field on a neighbor's farm. The game was underway when I looked up and saw my dad coming. Well, I started to run in the opposite direction, hoping he had not seen me. I arrived home believing I had won the race. But he soon came along with a keen switch that he had cut from a peach tree. He really let me have it. I had some pretty stripes on my back for a day or two, but I knew I shouldn't have disobeyed.

There was an apple orchard on the farm and each year we would dry apples for more money. We also dried other people's apples for them. This particular year, I believe it was 1919 or 1920, the weather was cold, wet and dreary. My father was having trouble getting the furnace hot enough to dry the fruit. He went up the hill back of our house where there were lots of dead dogwood saplings. Dogwoods never get large, so he picked up an armload of this dry wood. I recall that he carried two loads to the dryer. He proceeded to put all of it into the furnace. No wood burns hotter than dogwood. After filling the furnace, he went to the house for lunch. (The house was only fifty or sixty yards from the dryer.)

While eating lunch he heard a loud blast, and looked out of the window in time to see the dryer simply explode. The building was completely destroyed, along with dozens of sacks of dried fruit and about 100 bushels of apples that were in the "shoot" (sic) ready to be processed. To finish the season, Robert with his neighbors' help built another dryer much smaller than the one that burned. They soon had it in operation but the profits for that year were shot.

In 1914 before we moved from the store, a friend of ours who had been in Oregon came back to visit and spent two or three days with us. We learned shortly that he had smallpox, a disease considered fatal at that time. We were all vaccinated by Dr. Walker on February 5, 1914. The vaccinations which "took" were much more severe than the smallpox. People were afraid to walk by our house. Even our Aunt Lizzie Maguire thought she might catch the pox by talking with us on the phone. We were quarantined for six weeks—another disaster in Robert's and Molly's life.

My mother developed an eye problem. She had only one good eye at best, as the other one burst out when she was eleven years old. Finally her good eye began to fail. The doctor said it was a cataract. It was seven years before the operation could be attempted and she was almost totally blind most of those seven years. I remember Dad reading papers and books to her, but mostly he read the Bible. At long last the doctor said the operation could be done. Mother went into the hospital and the operation was a complete success. She was even able to read a newspaper. What a joyful time that proved to be!

My father and mother always respected their friends and neighbors. I never heard my father say an unkind word about anyone. In my presence the nearest he came to being rude was once as he listened to a windy gentleman who was always telling of all the wonderful things he could do and of all the wonderful things that he knew. This day he was really laying it on. My dad finally spoke up very gently to say, "Well, mister, you simply know too much for one man and not enough for two." The man was at a loss for words and left immediately. From then on he never used his blowing tactics in Robert's presence.

In 1906 or 1907, Robert was elected constable of Wyman Township. He served only a two-year term, refusing a second term because he did not enjoy the work.

Some people thought him a gruff, hard-nosed individual. The primary reason for this was because Dad had a deep baritone voice. When he spoke, his voice sounded unusually loud. This loud voice was only normal for him; no way did he intend to sound harsh or unkind to anyone.

I never heard my parents argue between themselves. I'm sure they did not always agree one hundred per cent, but if they had disagreements they never let their discussions reach the children's ears. Perhaps Dad could not build a house or sharpen a saw, but he certainly did comfort Mother during her blindness, without a murmur.

Also, his presence meant a lot to the family. When things seemed rough, he always managed to smooth them out.

There were several school teachers in his family. Aunts, uncles, brothers, and sisters all had teachers in their families. My parents hoped I would want to be a teacher. At this time (1920-1921) it was getting late for any of the other children to become one. All the children were married and had their own vocations except my sister Naomi and I. Before I had finished grade school, Dad had mentioned to me many times about teaching school. Finally I decided to give it an all-out try.

Dad made arrangements for me to attend school in Elkins, some six miles from home. It was quite a trip on horseback. We purchased a horse for this purpose and, of course, more clothes were needed. I finished the eighth grade at the Elkins school. Before I finished high school, an opportunity came for me to teach at a very small country school, called Black Jack, located in the northeast corner of Washington County. One of my teachers, Mr. Clint Jones, insisted that I take this opportunity, but I had no teacher's license. Mr. Jones took me to meet the county superintendent of schools, Mr. O.W. Bass. He said all I needed to do was to take the state teacher's examination which was given every three months. He thought I was sure to pass it, so I took the first exam possible and did pass, after which I signed a contract to teach at Black Jack school. I went straight to my folks to tell them what I had accomplished. They could not believe that their dream was coming true. To this day I feel very fortunate to have had parents who really cared.

The only disappointment regarding my teaching was that my father lived for only two school terms after my start.

During the years I spent with my parents I never saw my father ill except

for a light touch of the flu in 1918. He and Mother both had very light cases of the flu as compared to the rest of the people in the area.

My 1926-1927 school term was cut short due to finances at the school. I decided to go to California with my girl friend and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. J.J. Mathis. I had known her only since August, a matter of six months. Although I felt very bad about leaving my parents at that time because of Dad's rheumatism, being a young unattached fellow and madly in love, I was determined to go. I simply could not resist. My parents tried to lighten my burden by assuring me that they would be okay.

With all arrangements complete, we headed for California in a Model T Ford and arrived in Fullerton, California on December 26, 1926. I did not go with any intention of staying, as I was determined to return to Arkansas and help my parents any way that I could.

After my departure for California, my father's condition worsened. One day he saw an ad in the newspaper regarding some medicine that would cure rheumatism. He ordered it and received it promptly. He began taking this medicine and after a couple of days his knees began to feel much better. He continued taking it for a week or two; his problem seemed to have been eliminated. Then, suddenly, he became seriously ill. I received a wire from my brother saying, "Come soon. Father is very seriously ill." This was in July, 1927. I was still in California because my girl friend (Ada Mathis) and I were married February 23, 1927. I left immediately for Arkansas by train. When I arrived, my father was much worse, in fact, so ill that I'm not sure he knew who I was. The second night after my arrival, Aunt Lizzie Maguire and I were sitting up with him. Mother was asleep due to exhaustion. About three a.m. we heard a noise from Dad's room. I ran quickly to his bedside where I found him half sitting on the edge of his bed. As I took hold of him to keep him from falling, he simply died in my arms. The doctor said his illness was kidney failure or, actually, Bright's Disease. He added that Dad's kidneys were completely disintegrated.

The last words my father uttered while in my arms were, "You don't know what a relief it is to be ready to go." It is my prayer that all of us can say the same when it comes time to leave this world.

Robert died July 20, 1927 and was buried in the Round Mountain cemetery.

In 1920 Robert organized a Bible study class. The classes were conducted in the Round Mountain school. Robert was elected leader of the class, but this activity was short-lived. At that time my father was experiencing a lot of problems with rheumatism in his knees and it was difficult for him to walk. Consequently, much of the time he was unable to attend the class. No one else seemed capable of leading it, so the class was soon closed for lack of a leader.

(I believe the following incident happened before the corn harvest in 1917.)

We had two teams of mules that we used to cultivate our crops. We ran out of corn to feed the mules and Dad had just sold his hogs. We purchased some corn from a friend who lived across the river, but rain had been falling

for two or three days. The river was so full that we could not cross it to get our corn. So my dad went to see a fellow who had a crib full of corn and begged him to sell him just one sack full to feed his mules for two days. The man said, "No!" Dad then asked him to loan some until we could reach our supply. But the man still said, "No!"

Dad left, went home and thought about it for a few minutes, then within the hour went back to see the man again. He still would not let Dad have any corn. Dad had a sack in his hand and very calmly said, "I'm going into your barn and fill this sack. I will return it when I can cross the river to get my corn." So saying, he simply walked into the barn, filled his sack and came outside. The disgruntled man only glared at Dad, but never said a word. Dad explained that he could not work his mules without food. Two days later Dad and I crossed the river to get our twenty bushels of corn. Father took the same sack, filled it to overflowing, and returned it. Dad called the disagreeable neighbor out of his home and said, "Here is the feed I borrowed." The man had nothing to say, but weeks later he came to Dad and apologized.

There was another incident about corn that same year. Dad had been somewhere and returned after dark. He rode into the barn, unsaddled his horse and put the animal in the stable. Then he proceeded to get food for his horse. It was pitch dark in the corn crib and Dad walked to the back part of the crib with his arms extended. To his startled surprise he walked right into a man. Father simply gave him the old bear hug. Believe me, Dad could really squeeze the life out of most anything, and the visitor gave in quickly. After talking it over, Dad decided to let him go home. Father said later that the fellow stated he would never again attempt to steal corn. He did not tell anyone of our family except Mother about this experience. A year or two after Dad died, Mother told me the story and identified the man. This was typical of Father's never saying anything bad about anyone. Many times he said, "If you can't say something good about a person, don't say anything."

Another of his famous sayings was, "If no one in the neighborhood likes you, you had better stop and take inventory of yourself." How true that is!

(As I remember, this incident occurred in 1919.)

Dad had sold his hogs and delivered them to the market. The buyer had to weigh them in a wooden crate, two or three at a time. When the last few hogs were being weighed, Dad noticed the purchaser had his foot under the crate and was lifting so hard the effort turned his face red. "Okay, mister," said Dad, "just catch all those hogs and re-weigh them."

"Why, Robert," came the reply, "I did not mean to lift up on the crate! I was only trying to steady it."

Dad wouldn't accept that explanation. The man brought all the hogs back to weigh them again. This time the weights were three or four hundred pounds more than the first weighing. Again, Robert never told anyone except Mother. I was there and saw the whole thing. Yes, my dad sold hogs to this same man several times after that, but the buyer never tried to cheat again.

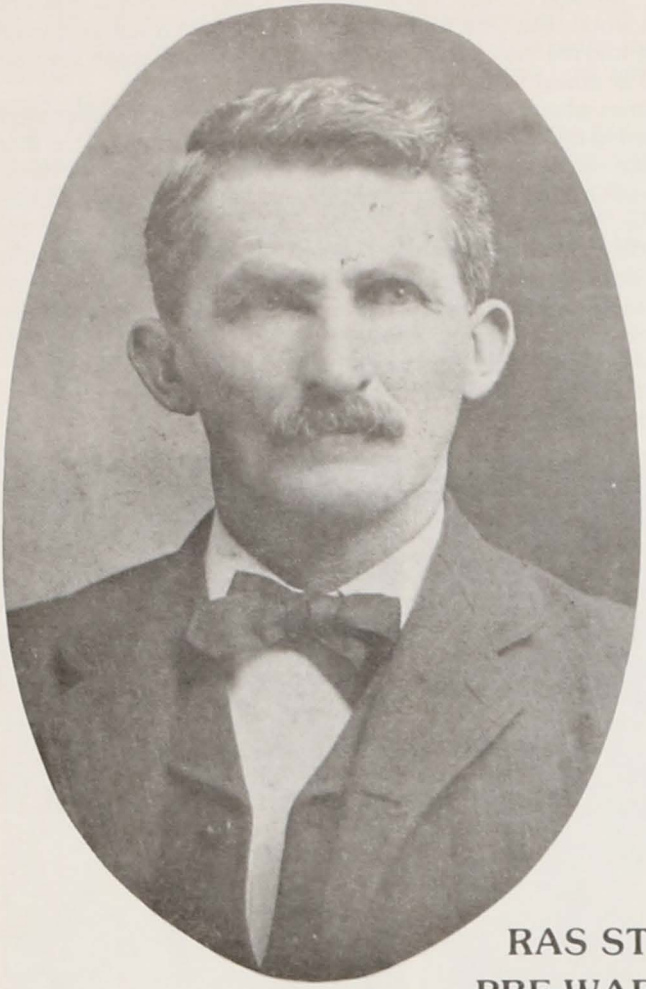
We had to cut wood both for cooking and for heat in the winter. Our only tools were a narrow crosscut saw and an axe. Both were usually dull and the

saw had no set—nothing to keep it from binding. It's a real drag to pull a no-set saw through wood. But Dad simply could not sharpen a saw so it would cut properly. He told me many times that I should learn to sharpen saws and axes properly. I'm proud to say I did.

I remember times when I would shed a few tears because my father seemingly tried so hard to make things easier for me. At times it seemed the more he attempted, the worse things became. Too, by this time he was having trouble with rheumatism. His efforts to stand and help me cut wood were too much for me. Sometimes my sister would assist. This gave him more time to spend with mother who, by now, was almost totally blind. My father was never cross or rough with any of his children. He was most considerate.

He was especially kind after I reached the age of fifteen. If I were planning to go somewhere or do something different, he never said no. Instead, he would point out the pros and cons of the situation. At times he'd say, "I would rather you would not go," (or do as planned). Ninety-nine per cent of the time I accepted his advice.

Mary Frances and Robert Francis Ferguson



RAS STIRMAN'S PRE-WAR LETTER

A Note on Billy

In 1860, Erasmus I. Stirman, then nineteen years old, began writing to his younger sister Rebecca a series of letters that would document his enlistment in one of the first Arkansas State Troops formed for the Confederacy and would cover virtually every major battle occurring in the Arkansas Department during the Civil War. In one letter he assured Rebecca that he would "make a tolerable good soldier." He actually became much more than "tolerable" as he went from private to one of the youngest colonels in the Confederacy by age twenty-two, and his letters from the battlefronts supply

new insights on the role of Arkansas troops in the Civil War as well as add new slants on the typical young Arkansans who fought that war. But the five letters I would like to deal with in this essay are the five letters Ras, whom Rebecca called "Bras," wrote in the spring of 1860 and early 1861, just prior to the beginning of the war. It is those letters, and only those, that note Ras' younger brother Billy.

In March, 1860, Ras went from Fayetteville to Paris, Texas to meet his father's relatives for the first time and to bring Billy home. Ten of his father's brothers and sisters had migrated to Texas from Arkansas back in the 1840's with William Stirman, Ras' grandfather, while his father, Alfred, and one sister, Mary Stirman Pollard, had remained in Fayetteville.[1] When Alfred's three children, Erasmus, William, and Rebecca, were orphaned in 1844, the Pollards became their guardians. In the 1860 Fayetteville census, only sixteen-year-old Rebecca is still listed as a part of the Pollard household, the two older boys already having gone out on their own, Billy to Mexico and Ras to college.

Although a year younger than Ras, Billy had already been in an army. He had been impressed into service by Emperor Maximilian's Mexican Army, and had already seen enough action to have been badly wounded in the foot.[2] In fact, the wound had been so severe that the Mexican surgeons had decided to amputate, and only by stumbling from the hospital bed, grabbing his old horse pistol, and forcing himself to stay awake for two days with the gun on the doctors, was Billy able to save his leg.[3] Ras didn't mention that fact in his letters as he waited for Billy to return from Mexico and occupied himself with the journey — being thankful that his friend Herman wouldn't be able to get any "tanglefoot," a popular Texas term for whiskey,[4] in the Indian nation.

It is significant that during this Texas journey, Ras' first letter back to Rebecca should be written from the main Butterfield Stage depot in Indian Territory, Boggy Depot. Boggy Depot, a flourishing town through which millions of dollars in gold, cattle, and merchandise passed back and forth between Arkansas and Texas,[5] could well be considered a symbol of the entire area and the times with its prosperity and its potential for growth and wealth. In 1860, the United States, Texas, Arkansas, and the territories were booming, and Boggy Depot showed it.

For despite the old cliche that there was no law west of St. Louis and no God west of Fort Smith, any visitor to Arkansas could see that life in the state was full of Southern charm and Southern opulence. The Arkansas well-to-do furnished their parlors with imported mahogany sofas upholstered in rich brocade and purchased their riding horses from England.[6] They could afford to throw lavish dinner parties featuring boned turkey stuffed with truffles, which they washed down with French wines;[7] and they gave luxurious balls at which they served champagne, lobster, and elaborate fruit ices.[8] Fashionable Fayetteville wives sent to New Orleans for oysters and fancy sugar plums, to Philadelphia for silk stockings[9] or the latest in satin gowns with matching satin slippers[10] while their merchant husbands ordered their frock coats from London tailors and had their carriages,

kerosene lamps, and sewing machines delivered from Cincinnati.[11] Shops had the finest in leather gloves and linen handkerchiefs, booksellers supplied the most recent novels by Victor Hugo and Thackeray,[12], and drugstores served the youthful set a new drink called soda water.[13]

To be sure, the price of prime field hands had climbed to $1700 that year,[14] but still the 1860 Arkansas census listed Washington County as having 1493 slaves,[15] and the affluent weren't yet worried about being able to afford good servants. And although abolitionists had begun so much activity in Arkansas that two prominent Fayetteville businessmen started THE ARKANSIAN newspaper to help "stay the onrushing abolitionism,"[16] and an abolitionist in Van Buren would get himself covered with tar and burned to death that spring,[17] the life of the ordinary wealthy Fayetteville citizen went on undisturbed.

In a wartime letter Ras would speak of wanting to drive the Union "abolition hordes" from Southern soil, but in none of these early letters does he mention abolitionism or the gathering states' rights controversy that would soon split the nation apart. In these letters he merely waits for Billy, chides his sister for not having written, and day-dreams about kissing all the girls at home, a very daring thought for a time when kissing was considered extremely gauche if the couple weren't engaged.[18]

Letter-One

Boggy Depot C T[19]
March 19th 1860

Miss Becca Stirman
Dear Sister

I am now within forty miles of red river and getting along as well if not a little better than I expected. I am well and have been ever Since I left. My mule has Stood the trip So far very well. The first night I Stoped I was a little uneasy about her but She was tired was all. I Stoped at Bryants the first night and in ft Smith the next. Herman Ridge caught up with us the third night after we left. We Stoped at an Indians by the name of Tragons thirty five miles from ft Smith. We had just got through eating Supper and walked out on the porch and who must I meet but Herman Ridge. I was very glad he caught up. He is good company and their is no danger of his getting on a Spree for we are out of tangle foot and cannot get any in the nation. We had an accident last night. Mr Dennis got his horse very badly crippled in the Stable So that he could not travel. He come half the day to day with us but we had to leave him. We left him twelve miles from Boggy Depot. I think he will be able to travel in two or three days. At least I hope so. I hated to leave him very much. I could not have been with him but one day longer, and he Said that I had better go on, So Herman and I come on and left him. Herman Says tell Mrs Washburn that he is well and doing very well.

Sis I think I will be in parris in three days more and hope I will meet Brother their but if I do not if he can be found I will find him. I am in fine Spirrits — and expect to be as long as I have good health. I would like to

See you very much but I will content my Self by looking at your picture. I often look at it as I ride along. Herman and Dennis have been wanting to See it but I told them it was my sweetheart and would not let them see it.

I have been looking all along for one pretty girl but have not seen but one and She was married. Those choctaws are the uglyest people in the world, the negroes they have are the best looking and the most intelegant by a good deal, but I am going on hear with a lot of foolishness that I know will not interest you. Kiss Ems, Frank, Eddy & Tommy for me and you may Kiss Little Vanvorst for me if you like. Tell Cousin Annie to kiss Hettie for me. Tell Cousin Annie to tell Hettie that a little texas bird Said so, but you must not forget to Kiss Little Vanvorst for me. If you do, well, I will when I come back.

Sis I think I will come back on the Overland. This trip is too long to ride a mule when I get homesick. Tell Uncle Jeff if he gets any news from Clark to write to me at Athens if he pleases. Give my love to all and take a good portion for your Self. So good bye Sis

from your beloved brother,
Respectfully
Ras

Letter-Two

Athens Texas Thursday March 29th 1860

Dear Sister

I landed at this place last Sunday and would have written to you Sooner but put off coming to town untill to day as I learned that the mail did not come in or go out untill to day. I found all of our connections well and I am much pleased with them all. I inteded to go to parris first but Supposing that brother would not be back from mexico yet a while I thought I would give him a little more time. I Shall not Stay as long as I expected. I Shall leave hear for parris tomorrow week. If you write to me any more you must direct them to parris. I will stay their two or three days and if I can Sell my mule I will come back by the overland. I shall not endeavor to tell you anything about the folks in my letter. I will leave that to tell you when I get back, but as for my Self I am well and very well pleased with texas and the folks. I have not heard from brother yet but I think I will when I get to parris. Sis you must give my love to all of the folks about Fayetteville and Kiss all of the girls as I am not their, but as soon as I return I will take that off your hands. With these few lines I remain your dear brother,

Ras

Letter-Three

Athens, Texas
Friday, April 6th 1860

Dear Sister

I have not heard from you since I left. The mails must be very irregular or you have not written to me, but I know it is the mail that is at fault and not you.

Sis you need not write to me any more as I Shall Start for Parris to day and Shall not Stay their many days. I think that I will be at home by the first of may if I have no bad luck. I am well and have had a pleasant trip So far. I have had Such a pleasant time Since I have been hear that I hate to leave, and they have all been So kind to me it Seems like leaving home.

I have not hear any thing from brother yet, but I think I will when I get to Parris. If I can hear where he is I may go after him but that is uncertain. If I do though I will let you know it.

Sis I had no Idea that I had So many kinfolks. Their must be at least fifty in five miles of each other. When I got hear I Stoped with Uncle Time but have been to See them all I beleave. The ballance I will tell you when I get home as I am in a hurry to Start. I will write to you again from Parris but you need not write to me as I will not be their very long. I must bring this Scribbling to a close as I have a very bad pen and worse paper. Excuse mistakes if you See any and do not examine to close for them as they will not be hard to see.

With this I am your----------Brother
E I Stirman

Billy obviously came at last and he and Ras went back to Fayetteville. The following spring, Ras, Billy, and their cousin Clay paid a visit to Palmyra, Missouri, where more relatives lived. The 1860 presidential election had come and gone with the Republican Abraham Lincoln having been elected, and South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas had all declared the U.S. Constitution null and void and had all seceded by February 1, 1861. By February 9, the delegates from those seven states had written a new constitution and had chosen Jefferson Davis as the provisional president of their new Confederacy. Arkansas, however, had not yet decided whether to join that Confederacy, where so much Arkansas sympathy lay, or to stay with the Union, where practicality stood, and Ras once more never mentions this political upheaval as he once again spends his time looking up relatives,[20] again waiting for Billy, and instructing Rebecca to kiss the hometown girls for him while he takes care of his new Missouri sweethearts.

Letter-Four

Jefferson City Mo Jan 10th 1861

Dear Sister

I arrived in this place yesterday evening well and in good Spirrits. I dont know when we will get off from hear. Clay has some business to attend to, and the river is almost impassible. I expect we will have to go up the river about eight miles before we can get over.

Billy and I had the good luck to meet with Cousin Wm Pollard. You recolect him I guess, Cousin Marys husband. We had a jolly time with him last night. He Sends his love to all of his relations & friends.

We have had a pleasant trip and very good weather. Our greatest trouble has been old Mrs Smith. She was taken Sick at cold camp but we have made out to get her this far. She has been ten times as much trouble as Mrs Buckner. In fact Mrs Buckner is no trouble at all. She goes to bed and Sleeps Sound till morning but old Mrs Smith groans all night and eats all day. I will be glad when we get rid of her. It wont be long now if we can just get over the river. You need not write to me any where but at Palmyria. Expect one from you when I get there. I cant Say any thing about coming back as I do not know when we will get tired of Mo but as Soon as we are tired of this country and want to See our girls we will Start home. You must write to me often as I love to hear from Fayetteville. Their is nothing more that I know of that would interest you So I close.

Your Brother
Ras

Letter-Five

Palmyra Mo Febry 10th/61

Dear Sister

It will Soon be Six weeks Since I left home and I have received but one letter from you. I will not blame you though for I cannot think that you have not written but once. I blame the mails. When you get this I will be on my way home So you need not write to me any more as I expect to Start for home tomorrow week if nothing turns up to hinder me. Billy has got back from Lewis County and we are having a good time.

Since I wrote to you last I have been up in Knox County to See Uncle Keller. I found him well and getting along very well. He Says you must write to him. He wants to See you very much. I have also been to Hannibal to See Aunt Beck. She was very glad to See me and to hear from you. She is most dead to See you. She Says She is Sorry She ever give you up. She was well and as Fat as a bear. She weights 180 lbs. I did not See Mr Wilks. He was gone from home. I did not stay but one day and night in Hannibal. Sis I wish you were here. Every boddy wants to see you. I guess it would hardly do to bring you up now for I have been braging on you So much that you would hardly come up to their expectations. But if I had you here I would not come home till Spring. I have got more Sweethearts than I know what to do with (but if you will promise me not to Say any thing about it, I will tell you what I do with Some of them). I bite them on the neck and use there mouths for lip Salve. My lips are as smooth as an onion. I dont expect I can blow my horn when I get back. The mouth piece wont fit for I have been trying so many different mouthpieces Since I have been here of different Sizes and different Shapes. But away with this foolishness. You may look for me home about Wednesday two weeks. That will be the last of this month. Give my love to all and kiss Lilly for me. If you See Jake tell him I will be home by the 1st of March. Give my love and to Henry too. But dont forget Mrs Powell. Kiss her for me too if you please.

With this I remain Your Brother as ever Ras

Finally, events forced even Arkansas into a decision. On April 14, 1861, when the Federal garrison at Fort Sumter surrendered to the Confederacy and Lincoln sent out a call for the states to raise 75,000 men to put down the insurrection, the Southern states that hadn't yet seceded instantly rallied to the Southern cause. Secession had been one thing, but armed coercion was something else entirely. On April 17, the day after Ras Stirman's twenty-first birthday, Virginia seceded, followed in May by Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

Billy's wound had left him slightly lame, but nineteenth century physicians were hardly rigorous, especially at Confederate induction centers, and he could probably still have joined the Confederate army.[21] But when Ras, their cousins Jimmy, Clay and Jeff joined the Pike Guards, a Fayetteville company of State Troops composed mostly of college students twenty-two and younger, Billy went back to Mexico, where he stayed for the duration of the war.[22] No letters to or from Billy in Mexico during the Civil War have yet been found in a dusty attic, and we have no reactions from him on that war. Nor does Ras ever mention him or ask about him in any of his letters to Rebecca from the same period. Ras' next letter after the Palmyra trip is dated July 1, 1861, when he is already in the army at Camp Walker. Only three months have elapsed from his Missouri trip with Billy, but Billy is never mentioned again, and somehow the silence seems almost intentional after

Fayetteville Gun Club circa 1905
Standing, L. to R.: Lafe Nettleship, Z.L. Reagan, C.O. Hansard, Burtis Rudolph, Charles Harding, B.N. Wilson, Shannon Bohart, Jack Whitten, Dr. Floyd Hight, Welch Gregg, Allen Davis, Will Anderson
Front row, L. to R.: Frank Martin, Chas. Winkleman, A.F. Wolf, Dan Bohart, Link Gregg, Joe Bell, W.F. Stirman

Billy had appeared so readily in these first five letters. And perhaps the speculation is admissable here that possibly the two brothers had had a difference of opinion about the war, that possibly Billy at twenty had already seen enough warfare and had possibly already had enough of the experience Ras was just beginning.

For when Billy returned to Fayetteville after the Civil War had ended, married Della Jernigan of Fayetteville, and became a U.S. Marshal, he was remembered for having had a good swearing vocabulary[23] but not for having had a quick gun. In fact, the significant episode recorded from his career as marshal is the Reed affair in which he didn't use his gun. It was in 1879 and the war was well over, but John and George Reed, both veterans of the war, hadn't managed to erase its experiences. They were apparently quiet and hardworking farmers when sober, but when intoxicated, they turned into bullies ready to use the kind of force that had been deemed necessary in the border raids and skirmishes of the war. John Reed had been drinking the night he went into town to get a friend out of jail, and when he refused to pay the bail and tried to free the man at gunpoint, the sheriff shot and killed him. George immediately swore revenge, but he apparently wanted to deal with the sheriff only rather than with the marshal. As GOODSPEED'S BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL MEMOIRS tells it,

> *He was apparently afraid of Marshal Stirman, and once begged him not to shoot him if he ever had any trouble with him. The officer would not promise, and soon after the conversation, Reed, while mounted, drew a revolver on the marshal, who quickly sprang under the horse's neck and pulled Reed to the ground, punishing him quite severely.*[24]

The next marshal after William Stirman resigned wasn't as forebearing, and when George Reed threatened him with a gun, he shot George off his horse, killing him instantly.[25]

Billy Stirman never achieved in his hometown the fame or quite the wealth of his older brother, who would become mayor of Fayetteville and later district attorney.[26] His achievements would never seem as significant as his brother's, and his biography wouldn't appear in THE CONFEDERATE VETERAN or CONFEDERATE MILITARY HISTORY. He was even, deliberately perhaps, ignored in the war-time letters of his colonel brother. But Billy, who by 1861 had fought in one useless war and who refused to fight in another, emerges as one of the more intriguing minor characters in the history of Arkansas.

Notes

[1]Rowena McCord Gallaway, "Some of the Progeny of William Stirman surnamed 'Stirman,'" FLASHBACK, 7 (January 1957), 15-21.

[2]From W.F. Stirman's obituary in the FAYETTEVILLE DAILY DEMOCRAT, Jan. 2, 1925.

[3]Ibid.

[4]This is Herman Ridge, son of murdered Cherokee chief John Ridge. See W.W. Heartsill, FOURTEEN HUNDRED AND 91 DAYS IN THE CONFEDERATE ARMY (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1954), p.xxi, for Texas whiskey.

[5]The site of Boggy Depot is near present-day Atoka, Oklahoma.

[6]Marian Tebbetts Banes, THE JOURNAL OF MARIAN TEBBETTS BANES (Fayetteville: Washington County Historical Society, 1977), p.69.

[7]Mary Chesnut, MARY CHESNUT'S CIVIL WAR, C. Vann Woodward, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), records myriad instances, p.541, etc.

[8]Ibid. See also Jay Monaghan, CIVIL WAR ON THE WESTERN BORDER (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1955), p.216 for a list of goods Albert Pike took to Indian Territory to lure the tribes into the Confederacy.

[9]William S. Campbell, ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF FAYETTEVILLE (Fayetteville: Washington County Historical Society, 1977, c.1923), p.12.

[10]Marian Tebbetts Banes, p.69.

[11]William S. Campbell, p.12.

[12]Mary Chesnut, p.595.

[13]Marian Tebbetts Banes, p.49.

[14]Clyde W. Cathey, "Slavery in Arkansas," ARKANSAS HISTORICAL QUARTERLY, 3 (Spring 1944), 66-90 and (Summer 1944), 150-163.

[15]Ibid.

[16]William S. Campbell, p.12-13.

[17]Clyde W. Cathay.

[18]Bell I. Wiley, THE LIFE OF JOHNNY REB (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1943), p.273.

[19]The letters have been transcribed as accurately as possible with the spellings and the erratic capitalizations left intact. I have added periods at the end of sentences where a dash, a slash, or a space was often used.

[20]Both Stirman and Pollard families had connections in Palmyra, Missouri.

[21]Bell I. Wiley, p. 245, notes that there were no physical exams of recruits until the fall of 1862.

[22]A fact also noted in his obituary.

[23]Rowena McCord Gallaway.

[24]GOODSPEED'S BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL MEMOIRS OF NORTHWEST ARKANSAS (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1889)

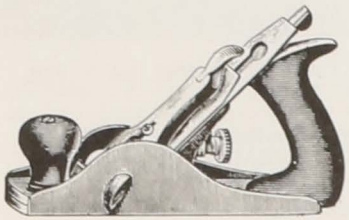
[25]Ibid.

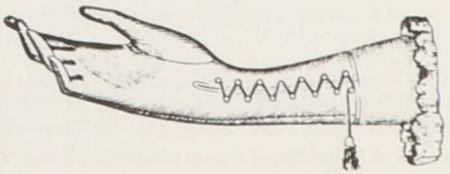
[26]Rowena McCord Gallaway.

Contributor's Note: Pat Carr, author of six books, including THE WOMEN IN THE MIRROR, is currently working on an edition of Erasmus Stirman's Civil War letters under a joint grant from the Arkansas Endowment for the Humanities and the Washington County Historical Society.

It is plain to your Editor that FLASHBACK can use as many articles from our subscribers as you will supply.

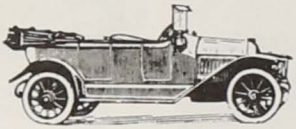
Please, give us a hand.





1923 SPRINGDALE CAR OWNERS

(Extracted from 20 April 1923 Springdale News by Mrs. Bobby G. Wilson)



Dr. C.G. Dodson
Charles Hinson
Vernon Brooks
Everett Head
Durrett Everett
Dr. Nolan Helstern
Frank Parrott
Jim Al Baggett
Tom Slight- 2
Carl Head
J.R. Joyce- 2
James Bowman
John Cannon
W.A. Kennan
William Gounboy
Willie Phillips
Harvey Jones
Jeff Sharp
J.L. Fitzgerald
W.A. Claypool
E.W. McKinney
Pioneer Lumber Co.-2
J.P. Deaver
A.D. Huston
Dr. J.E. Martin
Kimmons-Walker & Co.
Calvin Walker
T.J. Walker -2
George W. Kennan
L. Powell
Springdale Grocer Co.
W.F. Samuels
C.A. Owenby -2
W.A. Graves
P.W. Boone
D.O. Letch
Ben Lile
Welch Grape Juice Co.
P.H. Hough
Mrs. E.B. Barrett
Mary Ellen Pierce
J.F. Harris
I.K. Vaughn
Jno P. Stafford
O.B. Phillips

Dr. Crutcher
J.H. Myers
I.J. Russell
Fred Lachmund
William L. Bunch
Charley Phillips
J.M. Sparkman
F. F. Hazel
Reed Oil Co.
L.J. Willis
Mark Sanders
A.B. Coger
Taylor Jones
S'dale Light & Power
F.H. Shelton
Elmer Slight
J.M. Southerland
E.F. Rice
Mrs. Ed Fredricks
Arthur Dyes
Goss-Rogers Electric Co.
Will Searcy
Ed Clarkson
John McGaugh
Walter Jones- 2
Joe Steele
Everett McGaugh
Nix-Callison Undertaking
J.H. Bigger
Wiley Jones -2
City Meat Market
Ben F. Smith
J.S. Ewalt Jr.
Sam Watkins
Loyd Hill
L.O. Nickerson
E.S. Thompson
R.C. Clark
E.B. Cummings
E.B. Cummings
Famous Hardware Co.
Jeff Banks
Smith & Banks Insurance
R.T. Pray
J.W. Johnson

Max McFee
M.M. McFee
Stoney Graham
J.M. Hewitt
B.B. Brogden
A.E. Smyer
C.L. Smyer
L. Marks
J.W. Arnold
E.M. Heifner
Mrs. Fannie Colley
Kelley Bros. Lumber Co.
P.R. Ivey
J.H. McKinney
S.F. Clarkson
A&L Transfer Co.- 3
Clarence Odle
Abshier-Brian Motor Co.
Wilson Mercantile Co.
W.B. Wright
H.D. Ewalt
Lee Sanders
Claire Farrar
G.D. Lichlyter
J.S. Watts
Carmel Sparkman
Washington Co. H'Ware -2
Cecil Murphy
Herbert Sparkman
Robert L. Gosnell
L.S. Phillips
Tom Fowler
S.W. Hawkins
Wilson Cardwell
1923 FIREMEN
Earl Simmons
Wiley Jones
Andrew Ballew
Glen Sines
George E. Umbaugh
Joe Nix
Zach Curry
M.F. Lear
Cloud Means

by A.E. Smyer
City Collector

UNCLE SAMMY'S HEALING

Circa 1903 near Lincoln, Ar.

by Saundra J. (Moore) Moore

A few years ago I began tracing my Moore ancestors of Washington County, Arkansas. I discovered that my oldest living relative was George Waits who was a first cousin of my father Charles Elmer Moore. He was a resident of Hulbert, Oklahoma and has lived there nearly 60 years. He was 84 years old and had a very keen memory. In my interview with Mr. Waits he told many interesting stories. This is one of those stories about my grandfather, Samuel S. Moore.

> "After Uncle Sammy lost his first wife he married the Jordan girl (Emma N.). He came down with rheumatism. He had old Doc Blackburn and Doc Bean to come out there to see him. Jess Reed, who married Lydia Moore, had an old quack doctor. Jess told him that his doctor could cure him, but Sammy said 'no, I'm going to use Mom and Dad's (John D. and Elizabeth J. Carter, Womack, Moore) doctor.' They doctored him for about a year. They told him, 'Well Sammy, we've done all we can do for you. All you can do now is make peace with God'. Well, Daddy (Sam H. Waits who married Mary Moore) went up to that old quack doctor and got him to go up to Sammy's. When the doctor left town he whooped and said, 'I'm going to have Sammy Moore on the creek bank fishing in six weeks'. Did too. He went out there and Dad went with him. His legs were all busted open. He said, 'Sammy, we got to take you over to your daddy-in-law's (Jesse Jordan). Doc said we'll put you on a hack and put springs and mattress on it and get you over there'. Well, they took him down there just like the doc said. He put him in one of those hot baths. They put a chair in a pot with water in it and put a fire under the pot and sweated him. I went over lots of times and there would be a puddle of water around him. I'd say, 'How are you doing Uncle Sammy?' and he'd say, 'Oh I'm sweating my self to death'. He got well and was on the creek bank fishing in 6 weeks."

The children of Samuel S. Moore and Emma N. Jordan were:

Gertie	1903-1912	Myrtle Mae	1914
Charles Elmer (Tinker)	1905-1953	Melvin Leo (Tony)	1915
Samuel Preston (Pratt)	1907-1971	Nora Bethel	1917
William Hildred (Hill)	1907	Clifton Roscoe	1919
Golda Irene	1912-1919	Vance	1923-1923

Suttle Switch

by Gary Barnes

In the early nineteen hundreds
there was a village not far from here.
It lay upon the mountain edge
A switch track running near.

Not far around the mountain
Sam Moore made his home.
A kind and gentle man
Through out the country he was known.

He loved his dogs and horses
his orchards he tended well.
He loved his sweet wife Emma
so goes the story they tell.

Apples were their bread and butter
they furnished all that they might need.
They say the orchards were started here
by Johnny Appleseed.

Sam worked hard at Suttle Switch
trying hard to make ends meet.
Loading apples by the barrel
to sell at the county seat.

But when the coon were running
in the fall or winter time.
No use to look for Sam
for he was hard to find.

He'd lose the hounds on Old Moore's Creek
up High Ocean they would run.
Before they reached the old den tree
He'd be there with his gun.

The apples were his business
Suttle Switch was his home.
The apples are still growing
Suttle Switch and Sam are gone.

But for those who loved him
It's no trouble at all to see
The Village that once stood there
and a few old apple trees.

Sam Moore
and friend

The poem was written by Gary L. Barnes about Samuel S. Moore his grandfather. Mr. Barnes parents are Lloyd and Golda (Moore) Barnes of Summers, Arkansas.

continued from page 7

and doing the laundry involved boiling grimy greasy overalls and work shirts with yellow laundry soap, in the big black pot. And of one neighbor, it was told that, after the wash water had cooled enough, she would dunk the smaller kids in the suds and wash them down one at a time. Certainly, one wouldn't want to waste the soap.

At hog-killing time, the pot was put to use to render lard. The fatty parts of the hog were put in to boil. Pieces of connecting tissue that had contained the fat floated to the top and were skimmed off. When cooled, these pieces were crisp and crunchy, and were called "cracklins". They were a favorite delicacy for the kids — and the dogs too. The lard was used for cooking — frying, and as shortening for breads and pastries — and the surplus was taken to town and sold. Vegetable shortening such as Crisco could be bought in town; but not every one could afford it, and lard was right there and served nicely.

Some of the lard was used in making soap - yellow, sort of gummy and very strong. Here again the big black pot was put to use, when the lard was heated with lye to make the soap. Grandmother said that she used to leach the lye from wood ashes, but our lye was store-boughten from Wedington or Cincinnatti. (Soap for dishes, for hands or face, or for bathing, was Ivory, from the store.)

CHORES

A small boy on the farm had his duties, just as Dad and Mother did. And, the duties began before breakfast.

Check the water bucket in the kitchen. If it was not more than half full, go out in the back yard to the well, and pump up a bucketfull.

Next, help Dad with the milking. Lewis and I each milked one cow, while Dad did four.

After breakfast, see that the woodbox on the back porch was full. If not, fill it. I remember how outraged I was when I realized Lewis only carried in sticks of sassafras wood — they were only about half as heavy as oak.

Take the butter, the milk, the cream, and some other foods (all in crocks or syrup buckets) down to the springhouse, be sure to nest each utensil down in the clear cold water on the clean gravel among the minnows and crawdads.

In summertime, go to the garden for Mother to pick peas, beans, or other vegetables. Bring them in, wash, shell, or snap them. Back to the garden — now and then, not a daily chore — to pull weeds.

Feed the chickens (a task shared with Mother), collect and bring in the eggs. If there was a broody turkey or guinea hen, spy on her, play Indian, following her to find where she had hidden her nest, whether in a fence corner, a brush pile, or a briar patch. Chickens were less trouble because they nested in boxes set up for them in the henhouse.

After dinner, "slop" the hogs — to them went all of the scraps and peelings from the kitchen, both raw or cooked, with water poured off boiled food, soured milk, food too stale for our more sophisticated tastes — in

short, all edible material that, today, we waste in the garbage or down the disposal.

Afternoon or evening — feed the chickens again, fork hay down from the hayloft, then help with the milking; keep the water bucket filled, check the woodbox again, see that the dogs and cats got some suitable table scraps.

Sounds like a life of drudgery, doesn't it? It wasn't. The way I remember it, these chores were just something we squeezed in between our hours down on the creek, or up in the woods, fishing, playing Indian, exploring, climbing trees, or reading boys' magazines by yellow lamplight before bedtime.

ICE CREAM AND BUTTERMILK

The milk for drinking was sent to the springhouse each morning and evening. The rest was poured into dishpans and set on the table on the screened back porch for the cream to rise. Next morning, Mother or Grandmother would skim off the cream, and use the skim milk either to feed the calves, or to slop the pigs. The cream was accumulated until it had soured, then clabbered, when there was enough of it to fill the churn about two-thirds full, it was time to make butter.

The churn was a tall stoneware crock, with a wooden cover having a hole in the center. A wooden plunger fit loosely in the hole, with a wooden cross on the bottom of its shaft. If there was a small boy in the house, he was automatically elected to churn the butter. It was a task that I loathed. It took hours — absolutely hours! — of sitting in one place, churning that silly stick up and down before Mother would come to inspect. She would finally say, "All right now. It has come. We can stop now." What did she mean "we"? She insisted the time spent was only 15 or 20 minutes.

The floating lumps of butter were scooped out, patted together, and molded into one big lump. If company was expected, the lump would be put into a butter mold making a neat little brick with an ornamental design on its top. Then butter and buttermilk were sent to the springhouse.

Buttermilk was a favorite with us boys. We drank it with meals and between — salted to taste. Now and then Mother would say, "Buttermilk and cornbread for supper tonight." That's all we got: half a glass of buttermilk, with enough cornbread crumbled into it to fill the glass, a little salt, stir — and eat with a spoon. Delicious! Mind, this was **real** cornbread! Not the stuff that they sell in boxes of cornbread mix in the stores nowadays. No sugar, no white flour. Just cornmeal, milk, eggs, baking powder, salt and a little bacon grease. Or, if you make the cornbread with buttermilk, add a little baking soda.

Later when I was about nine, we got a Dazey churn. It was a crank-operated affair, with gears, and a four-bladed paddle, and made churning easier. Mother said it was lots faster. It still took hours.

When Dad brought home an ice-cream freezer, and a block of ice, and some rock salt — a combination that worked a lot like the Dazey churn but was much harder to turn — Lewis and I found it a lightsome task. Although Mother insisted that it took 20 to 30 minutes turning — a longer time than

butter churning — we felt it took hardly any time at all, it seemed like a privilege, not a chore.

Many years later, reading Eddington's, "The Nature of the Physical World", I was introduced to the idea that time is not the invariable thing we ordinarily consider it. I felt immediate rapport with the concept. Time has to be a subjective thing. I remember the churn and the ice cream freezer.

WHERE'S THE SALT?

Mother was not an absent-minded person. She didn't ordinarily forget things. But somehow she got to forgetting to put the salt on the table. At first Dad would ask for it: "Mary, could we have some salt" and she would get up, flustered, and bring the salt. But after a few times he didn't ask any more, just got up and got the salt.

Then one day at dinner, when he came in from the field (dinner was at noon, supper in the evening), Dad salted his vegetables, and Mother said "Dane! That is a new salt cellar! Where did you get it?"

Dad spread his empty hands on the table and said "Salt cellar? What salt cellar? I don't see any salt cellar."

As soon as we had finished dinner, Mother ran around the table and said "Now wait a minute. What pocket is that salt cellar in?" And she searched all his pockets and there wasn't any salt cellar. And it wasn't on the table. And it wasn't on the floor. And where else was there to look?

This went on for some days. The new salt cellar appeared in Dad's hand when no one was looking, and disappeared the same way; and repeated searches of his person and the room produced no results. I was baffled, but I was determined to ask Dad for the secret - I would promise not to tell. I picked a time when we had been to the store at Summers, and were on the way home. Dad just grinned and said "It just shows that there is white magic as well as black magic," and slowed the buggy and reached up to a limb of the mulberry tree we were passing, and plucked off two licorice gum drops. "See what I mean?" he asked. I felt in his pockets. No gum drops.

A few days later I was playing under the dining room table. It was a big round oak table, and it had an oaken skirt about four inches deep. And lo! inside that skirt, where you couldn't see it unless you really got down and under (and especially with the tablecloth in place) was tacked a little cardboard box, with a new little salt-shaker in it.

I showed Mother. She said "I'll fix him!" and filled it with cream of tartar. Dad hesitated a moment when he tasted his scrambled eggs at breakfast -then he quit talking and ate them all, saying that, really, they were better than usual.

This affair kind of shook my faith in white magic.

But where did those licorice gum drops come from?

QUERIES

Margaret Gragg, Route 2, Box 20, Hartshorne, OK 74547. We are working on researching our family lines on both sides, including GRAGG (Gregg), BARNES, TAYLOR, EDGE, WOOTEN, WORKMAN, THOMPSON, LITTLEJOHN, PLEDGER, HECK and CHAPMAN.

Betty Wasmer, 128 Woodland, Lansing, KS 66043: I'm searching for information on Mahala (DAME) who married Alford LEWIS 11 January 1846; William Dame married to Mary ENYART; George Dame married to Catherine WADKINS, and George Dame's son, Marion, who died in the Civil War.

Robert D. Plumlee, 1440 North Rosedale, Tulsa, OK 74127: Researching CARDWELL, CROUCH, DENTON, DONAHUE, FRALEY, FUGATE, GODSEY, GREGG, GRISHAM, HORN, ODELL, PENNINGTON, PLUMLEE and ROBERTS.

Delbert Wax, P.O. Box 9, Gillham, AR 71841 would like to correspond with relatives of Frank S. HAUPTMAN, born 24 October 1855, died 12 January 1931; Mollie Arizona Hauptman (wife) born 18 October 1869, died 7 November 1899; Alfred E. HUTCHINS, born 2 May 1854, died 3 August 1939; Florence BUXTON, born 1853, died 1924. Any information will be appreciated.

Frances Leveille, 223 Tivoli Drive, Long Beach, CA 90803 would like any information on the BALLARD families living in Washington County 184-to late 1860's. I have the cemetery and census and marriage records.

Jeanne Reidle, Route 2, Box 45, Verona, MO 65769: I need information on Rener Jane PETREE, b. ca 1854 or 1859 (information on 1880 and 1900 census varies). Prior to 1880, Rener Jane married L. L. ALBERTY. The 1880 census show them living in Vineyard Township, Washington County, AR with two children in Henry Alberty household. Rener Jane was born in MO and both parents in TN. I believe her parents are A.W. Petree and Sarah Amanda FOWLER Petree, but that is only a guess.

THE SAVIOR'S AIRPLANE Cpl. Jesse A. Niccum 1942-43

You can talk about rides in an airplane. But you haven't had any rides yet, till you've rode in the Savior's own airplane. He is the pilot that never forgets.

Oh, come get on board of this Airplane, and take a joy ride through the sky. It is headed right up toward Heaven, the land of the sweet by and by.

Oh, come take a ride in this airplane, it's loaded and ready to start. It will take you on board any moment, to a land where we will never more part. (Repeat Course)

If you would like to ride in this airplane, you shouldn't delay many days. You must fix it up with the Savior. He is the pilot who knows all the ways. (Repeat Course)

No tickets for sale to this airplane ride. You can't get to ride in that way. No cash is required for the tickets. Just Repent, Believe and Obey.

OUR READERS WRITE

(Editor's Note: In response to an inquiry from us as to whether J.F. Sanders knew the whereabouts of Hugh A. Sanders, M.D., a long-time life member of our SOCIETY, we have the following reply:)

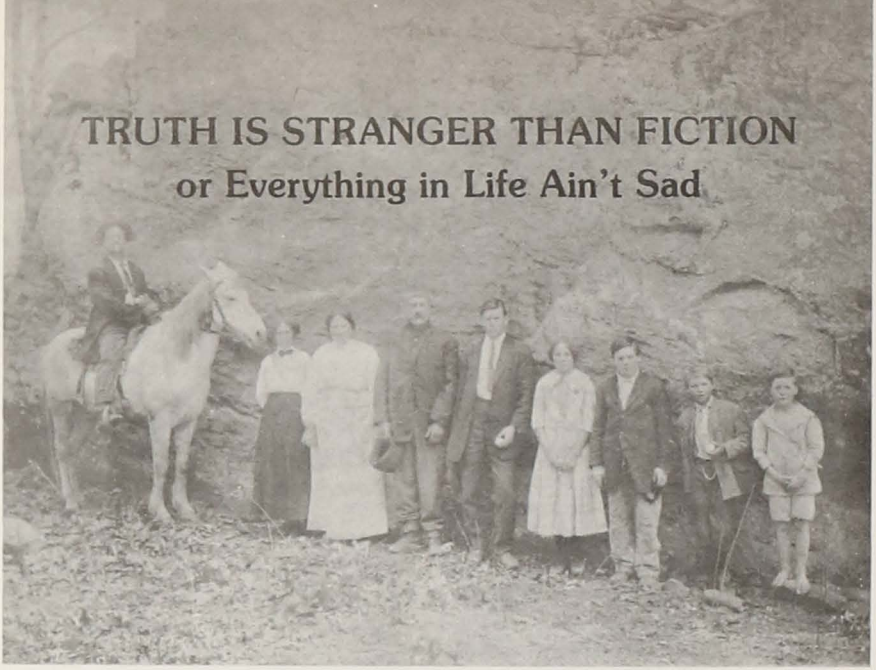
I am answering your letter of inquiry with regret because the person Hugh A. Sanders, M.D. is not of the Sanders Clan or known of by my father J.F. Sanders. My father's dad's name was William Jasper Sanders, a blacksmith on Mountain Street, down east of the square. He also built the first car in Fayetteville. He had sons as follows: Roy, Ira, Clifford (Tip), Frank and Jack. All are deceased with the exception of my father Frank who is now 88 years young. There were several sisters: Lucy (Moore), Mary (Davis), Hazel (Grandy) and Ruby Sanders, all deceased except Ruby who was 85 last May. My dad's nephew (Richard Sanders) lives in Springdale, and a nephew George Moore and great-nephew Bill Moore who resides in Farmington.

Mrs. Mary Jo Coburn

Louie C. Kirby, P.O. Box 119, Siloam Springs, Arkansas writes as follows: "The picture shown on page 24 of the August 1985 issue of FLASHBACK is incorrectly labeled when it states that 'It shows membership in Cane Hill College'. The label also states that the photograph was taken ca 1903-1904. I wish to remind you that the last building of Cane Hill College (the building shown in the photograph) was completed in the fall of 1886 on land donated by my grandfather, James Christopher Kirby, and that about 1890 this school ceased to offer college courses and that the Cane Hill Public School thereafter was housed in this building until the Cane Hill Public School consolidated with the Lincoln school. For substantiation of the foregoing facts see page 62 of WCHS Bulletin #9 entitled 'Early Settlers of Cane Hill' by Ellen Earle Richardson. This building is still standing and was recently restored thanks to funds received in a restoration drive. Miss Hessie Brogdon (later married James H. Kirby), my mother, taught the elementary grades in the Cane Hill Public School located in this building, from 1896 to 1900, and I know from her conversation that this building only housed the public school. True history is supposed to be a recordation of facts, so don't mislead some future researcher of Cane Hill history into thinking that this is a picture of Cane Hill *college students* ca 1903-1904 when it is only a picture of the old Cane Hill College *building* along with the Cane Hill Public School students of that period...I was born at Cane Hill and lived there until I completed the first year of high school — all in the picture building. I am the fifth generation of the Kirby family to have resided at Cane Hill since the first one settled there in 1820. I am a member of WCHS and have been for over thirty years."

(Editor's note: We thank Mr. Kirby for the information given above. It is always helpful to get the "straight goods" from someone who knows. We only regret that Mr. Kirby was not able to identify any of the students in the picture.)

TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION
or Everything in Life Ain't Sad



By Jesse A. Niccum

Right to left: Jesse Abraham Niccum, Jesse's friend Jeff Poore, Dewey Jackson Niccum, Lula Jane Niccum, William Osborn (m. Lula Niccum), John Anderson Niccum, Mary Ethel Fitzgerald Niccum, Mary Anderson (William's sister), man and horse unidentified. Photo taken somewhere south of Greenland.

Foreword by Lois Niccum Conduff
(Dedicated to Jesse A. Niccum, his ancestors, his heirs, and the uncounted cousins who share our name—regardless of its spelling.)

My dad, Jesse Abraham Niccum, born 10/21/06, died 1983, lived a good life. He was a tall man with very light skin (he never wore a short-sleeved shirt), blue eyes and dark hair. He gave advice and friendship freely. He was sure he was never wrong (he usually wasn't but his children wanted, just once, to be able to ***prove*** *it so). Nevertheless, we loved and admired him. His parents were John Anderson Niccum and Mary Ethel Fitzgerald, both born and married in Washington County, Arkansas. His grandparents were Jesse Irvin Niccum and Nancy Moore Niccum, and Jack "Andy" Fitzgerald and Martha ? Fitzgerald, married in Washington County, although born elsewhere.*

The Niccum cabin was one of two not burned during the Civil War, and this is where the "'lasses incident" occurred. "Down on the mountain" was where the Ozark Smokehouse is now (1985) located on Highway 71 South, at Mt. Gaylor. My dad, his brother, and father were digging a well there and hit solid rock. (The neighbors laughed their heads off because you never got water from a well on a mountain top.) However, my grandfather "witched"

wells with a willow twig and he knew water was there, so he sent my uncle for dynamite to blast out the rock. He set to work with an iron bar to be ready for the blasting. As he drove a hole, the bar slipped through and the hole began to fill with cold, clear water.

The little girl mentioned at the fairground church was my mother, Alta May Anglin, born 1911 in Cartersville, OK. She had polio when two years old, and was left with a crippled right arm. Dad's mother didn't want them to marry because "he would have to hire all his work done". Mom had nine children (seven now living) and a number of miscarriages. The only time help was required was after a birthing or a miscarriage. Often she did washing on a board and sometimes at the creek. Mothers worry uselessly, don't they? Mom was never handicapped. We children would even forget until some friend asked us what had happened; then we'd have to think before telling about the polio.

Dad was a rock mason, among other trades. He perfected the arch (free-standing) and made those brick things that seem to curl up and away. Many houses still stand with his rock veneer, one of which is the old Goff house by Wilson Park. I see rock walls all over Fayetteville which were his work. He did some of the picnic tables at the park. He was gifted in the kitchen, too.

I guess Dad's life was summed up in the title of his life story which he wrote around 1970: "Everything in Life Ain't Sad". For him that was true—it was very hard but not sad. From his advice to his singing of "Old MacDonald" to writing a poem for each important occasion to his sermonetes, you knew exactly who he was. He had pride and toughness, as well as hidden gentleness and love.

Old Goff house with rock veneer by Jesse Niccum

Photo of Jesse

This began in October 21, 1906 but don't expect me to tell you very much about the beginning for I only weighed about seven pounds at the time they say. So some time passed that all I know is what my ma told me. Of such hold very little interest other than any ordinary child, but really and truly I well remember many things that happened long before I became four years old. It was in the winter of the beginning of 1910 that some things happened that even right now I still hold a picture in my mind very clearly.

Probably I should have mentioned that my family was very poor for that holds a big part of this story.

What I remember so clearly was my granny and her old red rocking chair in the front of the fireplace. For my ma left me in the care of Granny that winter while she worked. My Granny lived with my Aunt (Elizabeth Miller—"Babe") in the old log house consisting of two small rooms. It was very cold I well remember, and never no never was there much fire cause they had to buy the wood. But the one thing I remember so clear was I would get cold and cry and Granny would cuddle me in her lap and say, "honey don't cry our tater or turnip will be done directly" for she was always roasting something in the ashes. Sometimes it would be just little sweet potatoe roots or maybe little small turnips, or small irish taters, but anyway to me it was a royal feast for really I didn't know of better things.

Another thing I well remember was of the coming of spring and how happy we all were to see the good old sunshine bright again. One day granny was napping and I decided to have me some cornpone and lases. So I went in the other room which was the kitchen, and there right in the front of me was some corn bread and a pitcher of sorgram. So I got me a saucer and then the pitcher of them lases, and it was one of them kind that has a spring on the lid, so I proceded to start taking lasses out of the pitcher in to the saucer. The spring hung up and until this day I don't believe I have ever seen any one pitcher have so much sorgram in it. So the saucer got full and it just kept pouring, and I never once thought to raise it up. I tell you it really was a mess and the most terrible thing I had ever done. I guess I would have jumped in the well had I thought of it. Instead I hid and pretty soon ma and Aunt Babe came home. And if I could have I do believe I would have layed the whole mess on granny even though I loved her very much. Anyway we will not go into details about what happened, but really I never liked them old lases till this day.

And it was this very summer that granny got sick and nothing could be done for her and she passed away. Of course she was 101 years old but I didn't realize that she had lived her life time and filled her purpose. One of the things I remember so clearly was they layed her body on some boards on some sawhorses right there in front of the fireplace. And they brought ice and put it in fruit jars and placed them around granny's body. I couldn't understand why they did for I remembered how cold we had been that winter. One Aunt (Susan Woodruff) lived in Michigan and she finally got there and they preached the funeral right there in that very room as small as it was. And I remember the preacher said that the spirit goes back to God who gave it, and I wondered how in the world it could get through that old clabboard roof. Well all things in one's life are not sad, that is why it is worth

living.

Shortly after granny died aunt Babe moved away some other people moved in that cabin. They had two girls, one the age of my sis, and the other older. The older had a pal her age. We lived about two hundred yards from there, and one day my sis (Sarah Niccum Bishop) was at their place and her and her pal got in an argument with the two older girls. And the larger two were going to thrash my sis and her pal, so they came running to our place and said, "what will we do?" I said, "run in the barn" and I went with them. Dad had been feeding some green corn, and there were several large corn stalks in there. So I got one of them big corn stalks, and the one run in the door first I hit her in the forehead with the corn stalk. And she fell back outside unconscious, and I ran the other one all the way home. I thought it funny, such a big girl would run from a little fellow like me.

Now I also have a brother (Dewey Jackson Niccum) who is six years older than me. This I thought to be very funny, one day he did something wrong, ma told him to get her a switch, which he did. And when he handed her the switch he ran, and she right after him. And he fell down and just as he got on his knees she caught up to him, got him with the very end of the switch on the tight seat of the pants. Then he seemed to gain a little start, but before he could get up she would get him again. Well they must be good and bad in all things for I really believe these practices saved his life in later years, which I will try to tell, come time.

From here we moved that fall to Butlers Ford on White River, and till this day I don't know why. We stayed there till in January, till the biggest snow came. It was a fourteen inch snow, and right in the snow we moved back to the same place. We left then in the spring. Dad sold that place and bought a place near West Fork. It didn't have a house so pop and Dewey (that's my brother, the same one I mentioned before) they cut logs and built a log cabin. We moved in and started living again. Food was scarce so ma cut wood for forty cents a rick, and pa and Dewey cleared land and planted some late crops that fall. ma and Dewey started cutting and hauling wood to West Fork. There they got one dollar and fifty cents for a rick. It seemed we were doing quite well till dad almost went blind. He had cataracks and they burned them out with some kind of medicine. And they had to keep ice packs on his eyes day and night. That brought on quite some problems, as them days we had never seen an icebox. And of course there were no refrigerators then. Anyway the wood hauling had to go on. And one day this happened, ma sat in a seat on the front of the wagon, and were going down a steep ill. Some how the brake broke and Dewey fell right down between the front and rear wheels. Ma tryed to stop, but of course it was impossible. And all that could be was, the team had to outrun the wagon. But at the bottom of the hill she did stop. And ma said, she was scared to look back for she was sure Dewey would be dead in the road. So she called, Dewey, real loud and he said, "what" as he was crawling out from under the wagon. He had kept up with it on his hands and knees. However, he was bruised some for the road was rough.

That winter dad's eyes got better. And he, or they, decided to really get over. So dad rented a place about three miles from there up near Mineral

Springs. And I would say, probably the land was so poor it would have had to have fertalizer to make brick. Anyway we began to cut the Persiman, and Sasafras sprouts, getting ready to make a big crop. Dad always built a seller, or a storm shelter every place we moved, for he was scared of storms. Anyway we did plant quite some stuff there. Also some over at the home place.

One day dad sent Dewey to a neighbors, to borrow a cradle, (that is a thing to cut oats with) Dewey fell down on the sharp blade and cut an awful place in his arm. We started to take him to West Fork to a doctor but we met the doctor, and he stopped right in the road, under a tree and sewed Dewey's arm, and it took several stitches.

Now this very fall I was six and able to eat cornpone with the best of them. And that was what we did. For we seldom ever had bisquit bread to eat. But anyway that was the year I started my education career. I went to Mineral Springs but not for long, for Aunt sis (Lula Jane Niccum Osborn) (Dad's sister) had eighty acres of land down on top of the Boston Mountains. Somehow dad traded the twenty for that eighty down there. We moved down there and that was the beginning of a life of mere existence.

One thing that should have been mentioned before now was a corn grinder, for it was a very important thing in our life. Now this thing was the most boring thing I think, and did think, that was ever made. But one could take a quart of hickory cane corn, and a few hundred turns of the wheel (which was about eighteen or twenty inches in diameter) which had a handle and around and around it would go. You would govern the speed by the way you felt. One of the bad things was where it was set. Dad bolted it down on the end of the porch. Rain, shine, snow, sleet, made no difference. We would kindly take turns at this job. Sometimes we would come up kindly short of meal when the weather was rough. But one thing, everyone got a share. According to age, size, or other considerations.

Well, now this mountain land had been fuddled with so much it had just about decided to specialize in persimon and sasafras sprout growing. But we, or dad decided to make a stand against them. Come spring dad had riged each of us a hoe. A hoe, that is a miserable critter. They have a long handle, and are governed according to strength. You can lift it high, let it fall hard, or use it anyway, other than a prop to lean on. Dad said that was forbidden. Dad decided to specialize in the growing of hickory cane corn, and whipperwill peas. Between sprout cutting we would lay some of this wonderful hickory cane in rows. Two grains in a place, about four feet apart, then the battle was on, the sprouts said they was, and dad said the corn was. So here we go, us and our hoe. We would beat the sprouts down one week, and the very next week you could see them coming right back again. This battle lasted all summer, but come fall we received our reward. Two nubbins to the hill, that meant more cornpone for winter. We never kept no hogs for it took all the corn for bread. Sometimes ma would make a batch of hominy.

In writing something like this there are many things you don't remember. But believe me there are many more you don't want to remember. Really, if the whole story could be told in detail it couldn't be read for the tears. But of

course every cloud must have a silver lining, and nothing is worse than it seems. But really if I had a choice, to go back and live that time over, or check out, I would say, "oh Lord take me on".

About this time it was decided time to work on the knowledge again. So on a nice frosty morning sis and I took off for school. It was three and half miles down there. But it wasn't so bad we could either walk or run. And those days they had never thought of having lunch at school. So we had to take ours. We would have a cup of peas and a piece of corn bread, and sometimes we would have an egg. I know how embarressed we would be, if possible we would sneak away to eat our lunch. Anyway I had learned some in the field I guess, for I got put in the first grade. That term we never went many days, because some were too rough, and sometimes we stayed home to help work. In fact there was no need of much school because if your future layed in these hills well that's why worry.

Winter is over, back to some more of the same. Dad had worked all winter hauling rocks off the land. Clearing land, building fence, making things look good from the road, or by the road. He was a good worker, but never once thought of anything other than existing of what the ground produced. But by now we owned a cow. And after the grass came up she gave us plenty of milk. But there they let the stock run out and fenced around the crops. So we put a bell on the cow and every evening some one would have to go get the cow. You could usely hear the bell from near the house. We, or I, (it was mine) had a very small dog which was very handy in this chore. When he could hear the bell he could be sent after the cow. One time the cow just seem to vanish and no bell could be heard. So the next day Dad took me and we went down in the big holler. Which is a few miles of terain in size. Anyway I never told you that dad was deaf so you see I was the ears. We walked and listened, and then walked some more. One time we stopped to listen and I heard a sound and glanced to my left, and saw a big velvet tail rattle snake right in eighteen inches of my leg. He was just ready to strike. If you could have seen this you would have sworn that I had undoubtedly had flying lessons. Dad killed it and we went on and did find the cow.

I would like to tell some more about this little dog. Well, as you might guess, everything and everyone had to earn his part of the corn pone. And Cricket really earned his share. He had no fear. He would tackle anything if you hissed him. And many things if you didn't. He would dig his way in a hole after a groundhog. And come out holding the groundhog, and the groundhog would be hold of him and the blood pouring, but that meant a change from whipperwill peas. One day I heard Cricket yaping very weak. I thought yes another groundhog in a hole. So I went down their and saw a ball, a big black one rolling over and over. On closer looking, I seen it was a big black snake wrapped completely around Cricket. So I got a big stick and finally got it loose from him, and he killed it. It was six and one half feet long. I believe it would have killed him had I not went and helped him.

Well, I remember that fall dad sewed some turnips which was a part of our winter food. And for some reason there happened to be one turnip that was quite larger than all the rest. So sis said she aimed to have that big one. I said,

"I am" and so ma made us put it in the pile to be covered up for winter. They piled the turnips up in a pile, then put dead grass over them, and then covered dirt over that. So they didn't freeze. Then in the winter they would make a small opening in the south side, reach in, pull out what you wanted, then fix it back. Every time ma went after turnips sis and I went to watching for that big turnip. One day victory came, the big one came out, sis said, "their is my big turnip". I said nothing but just eased around and grabbed it and away I went. Sis was right after me with ma hollering at both of us. I seen that sis was going to catch me so I threw the turnip, and it hit a tree and busted all to pieces, and by the time Ma got through with us we didn't either one want any turnips.

Well, by now Dewey was geting to be kind of grown up, around fourteen I think. And had noticed how the neighbors lived, most of them even had bisquits to eat. Some of them even had meat so Dewey learned that the way they got that flour was working in the timber. So some way he got to working with, or for someone and started buying some flour. I remember that Christmas Dewey got a sack of flour, and some lard, and six oranges, and just a little candy. But it was the best Christmas we had ever had. I remember we had bisquits and melted greese for breakfast. And I thought there just couldn't be nothing better. I should have mentioned school but we (sis and I) changed school and went to another one. And that way we got passed. I guess that is why we did it. But things were getting better, and a lot of the time we had bisquits to take in our lunch. I know I didn't care who saw me eat them for I doubted if there was anything better. I doubt if we went many more days that winter than we did before. But things went on as before come spring. Spring meant back on the hoe again. Man oh man did I hate sprouts. They say them sasafras roots make good tea. But I don't want any part of them. I had my part growing up.

I think it was about this time that some people bought a place right by us and then I had my first job. They payed me ten cents a day and dinner. Me and the woman pulled shoemake (sumac) roots and hauled rock off of four acres of land, built a rock fence. I realized ten cents a day wasn't much, but I did get a good dinner.

Well, school time came again and we went back to Schayberg. There I promoted myself to the third grade. And I fell madly in love with the school teacher. And for that reason I studied very hard. Really I learned more than all of them put together.

So we had another season with the sprouts. And that fall sis got married. And being growing up life did change some. Dewey rented a place a mile and a half closer to school. And Dad wasn't nearly so frisky anymore. The place had much better land and a better house. So we moved and it was quite an improvement from what we had. That winter I went to school and I started me a business. I would come home from school, go chop a locast post, carry it to town and sell it for ten cents. There I had my treats, my sholder got used to carrying the post. And it wasn't to awful if you kept your mind on the reward.

Then things changed a lot, World War I got going and a lot of young men

went to the war. Dewey was not quite eighteen when they regestered so he didn't go. Well, by now I am growing up and have a pretty good third grade education. I was twelve years old my next birthday. So I got me a job, working for a man, helping him cut timber. I could run one end of a two man saw quite well. He payed me fifty cents a day and board. Some of the time we didn't cut timber, and I worked on the farm. One time he got sick and he sent me with the team to haul a log. I didn't know but little about that kind of work, but the mules did, they knew how. Well, there I lived one of the worse one half days of my life. I loaded that log the third time before it stayed on the wagon. I stayed there with that man quite a while. Then next I got a job with two men, cutting ties. We would start at three o'clock of a morning, drive to the woods with two wagons. One man and me would start sawing timber, the other man would start making them. And when we got thirty two cut the other man would help make them to. I would drag them to the wagon with a horse. We would usually be ready to start back to town by noon. Anyway they payed me one dollar a day. I thought it was a lot of money.

The next fall ma and I got a job working in berry plants. We each got a dollar a day. We had to walk three miles to the place to work. We did pretty well and had plenty to eat while that job lasted. Then about that time I tried to make some ties. I could make a few but I just wasn't a good hand at that kind of work. Dad's health by this time was failing, and none of us were too interested in the tussel with them sprouts. So that year Dewey got a hankering to move to Miller Chapel. There he rented a farm and it had a good house. So it was a real treat from what we had. But there is always a price to pay for what you have. So this one was this. I fell heir to the job of hauling the ties and posts to Winslow. That was about nine miles. Some uphill and some worse. Anyway they would start me every morning with a load. When you might think that was a snap you should try it for yourself. One trip would be plenty, I didn't tell that I had a buddy, it was Levi Easter, he also took a load. He was a man that one could never forget. One thing I well remember, he would have a bisquit in one pocket and piece of fried meat in the other, not wrapped up either. That only lasted that one year.

Then we moved right back to the old place, I think it was about this time that Dewey left us and went to Greenland. Cliff (son of John Anderson Niccum and Mary Ann Phelan Niccum) and Alice (Alice Putman Niccum) lived there, but I think Dewey stayed with Louis (Lewis) Anderson. Somehow we or dad and ma decided to move to Springdale about that time. So they bought a tent and put it up and we moved. If I would show you where that tent was set, now, you wouldn't believe it. Anyway there was a living to make, it seemed to be me to make it. So I got an idea that washing windows would be the way to make it. So down the road I went. Stopping at stores and all other business places. Finally I came to a cafe, I asked if they had windows to wash and everything else. So he hired me for four dollars and fifty cents a week. And I was to start at five o'clock in the morning. At that time he didn't say what time I could go home. But he said, "you eat anything you want, but lay off of the pop and ice cream." Well, that was the

worse deal I ever made in my life, even till now. He had me come from five in the morning till eleven at night. I stayed with it all that winter and spring. And in the summer sometime at the last, his wife would slip me an extra dollar each payday. Well, I tell you some of what I did. I moped, washed the windows, washed the dishes, helped prepare the dinner, watched it so it wouldn't burn, carried the water, cleaned the cook tables, cleaned the stove, made the soft pies, and many other things, too numerous to mention. And that was seven days a week. I got to the place where the only thing I could eat was milk and crackers. But the good Lord was with me and the lease ran out. And they closed the joint. Well, there I was out of work. And at that time ma and dad was depending on me for support. So I went to going from house to house asking for any kind of work. I did get a little work and little pay. Sometimes I would work three or four hours and get a quarter, or thirty or thirty-five cents. It was pretty rough. About that time they were putting the water and sewer in Springdale. So I got a job carrying water for the men to drink. It was a rough job. But it paid a dollar a day, so I wouldn't have traded places with the president. Well, sometime after that we moved to Fayetteville, there I got a job on Parker Nursery. And I got fifteen cents an hour. That was the biggest pay I had ever had. I would get a check for nine dollars and give it to ma. She would give me a quarter or sometimes thirtyfive cents and I would go to the show at the Royal theater. (southside of square, s.e. corner of Block & Mtn.) I think it cost fifteen cents then. I would get some nigortoe candy and was quite happy.

Oh, I forgot about the mountain farm. Dad had traded it for a house on Rose hill. That was where we lived, and then he traded the house for forty acres about four miles from Greenland. On West Fork route two, blackoak road. There we moved in an old house called the Dunham place. And it was hardly a house. There I got a job helping a man build a barn for seventy five cents a day. And there we starved through the winter. And I should add froze also. Then in early spring I got a job on the farm working for seventy five cents a day and dinner, and I also rented a house from them. And payed six dollars a month for it. But in a short time they raised my pay to a dollar a day. And free house rent. Considering all the side lines that was the best job I ever had. So I stayed there two years. And I had money in the bank, a good cow, a good horse and saddle, and two good hogs. I had plenty of taters and four acres of corn. One day a man came out there, and I gave him the cow for his interest in his car, which was a 21 Chev. I quit work and started riding up and down the highway, I thought I was doing fine.

At this time dad had built a shack on his place, and dug a well. But we moved to town for a spell. There I worked on the overhaul of the Royal theature for 25¢ an hour. I got paid in cash, and I really lived high, that is for me. Somewhere just about this time dad and ma went back to the cabin he had built. And that kind of turned me loose. I slept at the theature and ate at the cafe. All went pretty good till the job was finished. And that finished it all, even a place to sleep. So I went to my sister who lived just south of the University of Arkansas. There I remember at Christmas time, I had already met a girl, (Alta May Anglin) and was courting her at the Fairground church. But this

Christmas caught me broke. And I felt I should have a present for this girl. Just about this time a boyfriend of mine was leaving Fayetteville and ask me to go. His brother worked in the Coal mines at Horthorn, Oklahoma. So we left on a freight train about eleven one night. And we got the coldest I have ever been. The next day we got to Neosho, Missouri, when the train stopped on the side track. We were in a car loaded with phone poles and snow. I knew I was freezing to death for I began to get warm and sleepy. And that is a sure sign that one is freezing to death. So I managed to get out and go in the depot. There they had a red hot stove and I couldn't even feel the heat. Then later I got sick and went outside and vomited. I never have been sicker in my life. We rode that same train to Veneta, Oklahoma. And there we waited several hours for a train that would come or go our way. But due to cold and ice they just didn't run a train. We spent our last money for a short stack. Then about three days later we met a hobo who knew more than us. He said, to go mooch a loaf of bread. And he would get the taters and lard. So we did, then went to a Salvation Army and cooked the taters. We had lots of greese so we nearly boiled them in it. We ate the taters and soped the gerese and did we ever get sick. This was in McAlast, Oklahoma. We had to come back east and no train came through for three days. So we had to stay in the depot, for there was nothing else we could do. And every time we would go to sleep a cop would hack us on the bottom of the foot with a black jack. He really made life rough for us. Anyway that third day I had gotten so hungry I wished for some of the old corn pone and peas. So that evening late I went to a bakerey and ask for something to eat. They ask what I wanted. I said, anything, even bread. They gave me a big sack of stale doughnuts and were they ever good. That night a train came through so on we went. We got to Haleyville, Oklahoma. There we stayed the rest of the night in jail and caught up on a little sleep. The next day we walked out to mine number 12, that was where his brother was working. We went to the place where he stayed. I have seen better, but due to the weather I was working with a man from Henrietta, Oklahoma. And I was to get a third part of what was made. Jack, my pal, at that time I thought he was, He went to work with his brother. Things didn't go so bad until payday. Then my pal and brother went off without paying their board. It went on for a time and the man's wife where we boarded was pregnant, and the man I was helping quit. So I had no pardner and no money to pay board. Bud, that was the man I boarded with, said, can't you cook? I said, I might so I got hooked to do the cooking. And also wait on the woman there. My cafe training helped so things went quite well. Then I just wasn't happy with my job and couldn't see any future in it. So one time I got a chance and left. I hitched to Wilberton, got a freight to Wister, another to Fort Smith, then home to Fayetteville. I went to work for a contractor pouring cement. I boarded on Dixon street. That same year I got married and the ones who read this story probably will know as much about my life as I would care to tell.

J.A. Niccum

P.S. Not long after we left the old farm on Boston Mountain, 71 highway came right through the middle where there are several nice houses built now.

This Fellow
has volunteered
to collect stories
for FLASHBACK.
Shall we send him
to see you?

ISSN 0428-5573

TABLE OF CONTENTS

There and Back Again 1
Robert Francis Ferguson 9
Stirman's PreWar Letter 22
1923 Car Owners 31
Uncle Sammy's Healing 32
Queries 37
Our Readers Write 38
Truth is Stranger 39

February 1986